

# **TRANSCRIPT**

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## **FARM BILL NUTRITION FORUM SEPTEMBER 29, 2005 ALEXANDER HAMILTON CUSTOM HOUSE AUDITORIUM ONE BOWLING GREEN NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

PRESENT:

ROBERT CANAVAN  
ERIC BOST

2                   MR. CANAVAN: I'd like to  
3                   organize this so we can move quickly  
4                   through these speakers. I'm going to  
5                   call groups four individual speaks in  
6                   order, ask them to come down to the  
7                   microphone areas where there are two  
8                   of my colleagues who will show you to  
9                   the on-deck seats, and I will call  
10                  each individual from that point on to  
11                  come up to speak.

12                 My colleague John Magnorelli is  
13                 timing the presentations and has  
14                 signals that will alert you to the  
15                 30-second mark and to the end of your  
16                 time. John is a senior official in  
17                 Massachusetts scholastic football  
18                 circles. He's a fair judge and he is  
19                 used to being listened to.

20                 Let me ask -- by the way, we  
21                 have a much more robust turnout than  
22                 we ever could have dreamed of so we  
23                 really need to move through as quickly

24           as we can. Everybody wants the  
25           under-secretary to hear their concerns

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2 and their suggestions. So let me  
3 begin right away, with -- Yvonne  
4 Tasker-Rothenberg, Jeff Ambers, Pam  
5 Darby and Jodi Harawitz to come down.  
6 And let me ask Yvonne Tasker  
7 Rothenberg to proceed immediately to  
8 the microphone to begin the  
9 presentation.

10 Thank you.

11 MS. ROTHENBERG: Good morning.  
12 I'm chairperson of the Sierra Club,  
13 Atlantic Chapter, Farm and Food  
14 Committee. We have 45,000 active  
15 members in New York State. The Sierra  
16 Club and coalition of farm and  
17 environmental groups in New York State  
18 has produced a report which documents  
19 environmental degradation and  
20 detrimental effects to the public  
21 health resulting from confined animal  
22 feeding operations in our state. The  
23 report is appropriately titled The  
24 Wasting of Rural New York State.

25 To a large degree, State and

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2 Federal subsidy payments to pay-fill  
3 operators are allowing pay-fill  
4 expansion beyond environmental and  
5 economic sustainability. In effect,  
6 we, the taxpayers, are paying for the  
7 destruction of our rural soil, water  
8 and communities for the  
9 over-production of foods that are not  
10 even necessary for human health. We  
11 have documented that some of the most  
12 irresponsible operators in New York  
13 are recipients of large Federal  
14 subsidies. For example, the Marks  
15 Farm, which had a 3,000,000-gallon  
16 manure spill into the Black River  
17 recently resulted in a kill of over a  
18 quarter-million fish. Willet Gehring,  
19 now being sued by local citizens for  
20 damage to their health, and recently  
21 cited for manures spills and inhumane  
22 conditions for their livestock.  
23 People in Niagara County cited for  
24 fish-killing spills into Twelve-Mile  
25 Creek and ultimately into Lake

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2 Ontario. And there are more.

3 We feel that U.S. farm policy  
4 must focus on rewarding farmers who  
5 practice good environmental  
6 stewardship as the basis of an  
7 environmentally sustainable farm  
8 management plan. The goal of farm  
9 policy should be to protect our  
10 resources, even better to enhance our  
11 soil and water resources, to insure  
12 available resources for future  
13 generations. We must reward farmers  
14 who practice environmental stewardship  
15 and we must require environmental  
16 accountability from recipients of  
17 Federal and State agricultural  
18 subsidies. Pay-fill operations are  
19 designed to socialize the costs for  
20 the operation to the community while  
21 they privatize the profits for their  
22 corporate owners. We in New York  
23 State are suffering from the  
24 disastrous environmental and economic  
25 results of government farm policy

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2 which for years has financially  
3 supported a nonsustainable destructive  
4 get big or get out policy. For the  
5 2007 Farm Bill we support a more  
6 enlightened, more efficient, more  
7 environmental sustainable policy with  
8 emphasis on crops that are  
9 nutritionally sound.

10 On a personal note, I am  
11 appalled that taxpayers are supporting  
12 the production of products that are  
13 destroying the environment and are not  
14 necessary to human nutrition. I have  
15 consumed no animal products for seven  
16 years and at age 63 enjoy excellent  
17 health, as well as being able to run a  
18 6:40 mile as a nationally ranked  
19 masters athlete.

20 I urge this committee to read  
21 carefully Dr. T. Colin Candel's  
22 nutritional study and to end subsidies  
23 for livestock production. Our food  
24 choices have a most profound effect on  
25 our health and on our environment.

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2 Thank you.

3 MR. CANAVAN: Jeff Ambers.

4 Could I ask each presenter to  
5 identify themselves by name and by  
6 organization for the benefit of our  
7 transcriber. Thank you.

8 MR. AMBERS: Good morning. I'm  
9 Jeffrey Ambers, executive director of  
10 the Yorkville Common Pantry, New York  
11 City's largest neighborhood-based  
12 emergency food program, located in  
13 East Harlem, one of the poorest  
14 communities in the United States. The  
15 Yorkville Common Pantry's five  
16 emergency food programs combined  
17 distribute over one and a  
18 quarter-million meals annually to  
19 14,000 low-income New Yorkers. We  
20 operate year-around breakfast and  
21 dinner programs and food pantries that  
22 provide food to 700-plus families each  
23 week. In 2003 we started 24/7 YCP,  
24 New York State's only emergency food  
25 program to operate 24 hours a day, 365

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2 days a year.

3 The Yorkville Common Pantries  
4 primarily serves residents of East  
5 Harlem, many of whom are economically  
6 poor and suffer from various health  
7 conditions. East Harlem is one of  
8 the most obese communities in the  
9 United States with 62 percent of its  
10 residents either obese or overweight.  
11 The death rate from diabetes in East  
12 Harlem has grown 230 percent in the  
13 past decade, twice the City-wide  
14 average. East Harlem's unemployment  
15 rate is 17 percent and nearly 40  
16 percent of its families survive on  
17 less than \$15,000 a year. In 2004,  
18 only a quarter of its population met  
19 basic self-sufficiency standards. And  
20 the food stamp participation rate  
21 among eligible East Harlem residents  
22 in 2004 was just 63 percent.

23 The USDA could better assist us  
24 in providing our clients with more  
25 nutritious food in a number of ways.



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2 By encouraging local government to  
3 streamline the application process for  
4 food stamps and increase food stamp  
5 utilization in New York City, by  
6 increasing TEFAP food and  
7 administrative budgets and by giving  
8 the recipients of TEFAP the  
9 flexibility to purchase food that is  
10 nutritious and culturally relevant,  
11 including purchasing food from local  
12 farmers. USDA bonus buy should go  
13 directly to emergency food providers  
14 and the types of products purchased  
15 should be based on nutritious need as  
16 opposed to market surplus. We depend  
17 on and appreciate TEFAP support.

18 That said, would it not be wiser  
19 to give programs like ours the choice  
20 in the foods we distribute so that we  
21 can provide more fresh, vitamin-rich  
22 foods rather than more canned goods?  
23 Our clients, the residents of East  
24 Harlem, have five times that City  
25 average of diabetes-related

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2 amputations, and we are hurting rather  
3 than helping them by not addressing  
4 problems that have clear and simple  
5 solutions.

6 Thank you.

7 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you,

8 Mr. Ambers.

9 Pam Darby.

10 MS. DARBY: Good morning. I  
11 want to thank USDA and the  
12 Under-Secretary Bost for holding this  
13 forum to discuss the nutrition title  
14 of the 2007 Farm Bill.

15 I am Pamela Darby, a registered  
16 dietitian, and I am chair of the New  
17 York City Nutrition Education Network  
18 known as NYCEN. NYCEN seeks to  
19 improve the food and nutrition  
20 environment for a healthy New York  
21 City. NYCEN strongly deems it  
22 necessary to provide consumers with  
23 access to affordable and nutritious  
24 food in addition to insuring sound  
25 nutrition education. Additionally, we

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2 feel that the 2007 Farm Bill can serve  
3 as a solid foundation to bring Federal  
4 agricultural policy closer in line  
5 with Federal nutrition policy.

6 USDA should be applauded for its  
7 provision of fresh fruits and  
8 vegetables through the farmers' market  
9 nutrition programs, both for the WIC  
10 and senior programs, Department of  
11 Defense sponsored school program,  
12 fruit and vegetable snack program and,  
13 to some degree, commodities, for the  
14 emergency food assistance program and  
15 the commodities supplemental food  
16 program.

17 NYCNEN would like to see more  
18 wholesome fresh foods entering the  
19 food systems through the channels.  
20 Behavior changes that we are looking  
21 for are at the individual level, but  
22 we strongly feel that those changes  
23 cannot occur without strong  
24 institutional change occurring first.  
25 Consumers rely on many institutional

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2 food systems, from soup kitchens and  
3 food pantries to school cafeterias,  
4 hospitals and even grocery stores and  
5 bodegas. If the foods available in  
6 those settings are not wholesome and  
7 healthful options, consumers cannot be  
8 expected to eat the recommended foods.  
9 The paradox is that the foods put into  
10 these institutions are dictated to  
11 some degree by Federal agricultural  
12 policy, through TEFAP, CSFP and many  
13 others. Yet the government also sets  
14 forth nutrition policies for all  
15 consumers via the food guidance  
16 system. Certainly, commodities that  
17 the government provides and  
18 distributes through its nutrition  
19 programs should adhere to nutrition  
20 standards set forth by USDA. The 2007  
21 Farm Bill represents an opportunity  
22 for both agricultural and nutrition  
23 policy to emerge.

24 In summary, NYCEN makes the  
25 following recommendations for the 2007

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2 Farm Bill. Nutrition education is  
3 needed by all Americans regardless of  
4 income and program participation.

5 Therefore, we recommend that the food  
6 stamp nutrition education program  
7 retains its focus on providing hearty  
8 nutritional education rather than  
9 determining a lengthy list of who can  
10 receive this education.

11 Government commodities  
12 distributed to its nutrition program  
13 should adhere to nutrition standards  
14 set forth by the USDA. Federal laws  
15 and regulations should be amended to  
16 provide for in-state or local  
17 preference particularly regarding DOD  
18 farm-to-school purchases. Initiatives  
19 focused on improving access to WIC,  
20 farmers' market nutrition program,  
21 seniors farmers' market program, and  
22 particularly the cornerstone food  
23 stamp programs, should be supported.  
24 Continued funding for WIC and senior  
25 farmers' market nutrition program, and

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2 support for electronic bankage  
3 transfer at farmers' markets.

4 In conclusion, NYCENEN firmly  
5 believes that farm policy should  
6 foster agricultural and food systems  
7 based on the coordination of Federal  
8 agriculture and nutrition policies.  
9 Such policies should promote a  
10 healthful and culturally appropriate  
11 food supply and provide for nutrition  
12 education to all consumers.

13 Thank you.

14 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you,  
15 Ms. Darby.

16 Anyone who has written text of  
17 their presentation, if you care to  
18 share it with the transcriber, to  
19 insure absolute accuracy of your  
20 presentation, please feel free to do  
21 that directly with the transcriber.

22 As I asked Jodi Harawitz to  
23 speak to -- to come to the microphone,  
24 let me ask the following people to  
25 come down to the waiting area:

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2 Edie Mesick, Matthew D'Arrigo,  
3 Susan Prolman and Bob Hokanson.

4 MS. HARAWITZ: Good morning. I  
5 want to thank you USDA Under-Secretary  
6 Bost for conducting this forum today  
7 to discuss the 2007 Farm Bill.

8 I'm Jodi Harawitz, director of  
9 food access at food change. And I'm  
10 here today representing the New York  
11 City food stamp task force, which was  
12 founded more than 15 years ago and is  
13 a coalition of over 50 organizations  
14 and individuals that are dedicated to  
15 improving access to the food stamp  
16 program for lower-income New Yorkers.

17 The task force members represent  
18 a broad array of social service  
19 providers, attorneys, advocates and  
20 other community members from a variety  
21 of organizations. The task force  
22 seeks to improve access to the food  
23 stamp program. We believe strongly in  
24 the importance of the food stamp  
25 program as a crucial mechanism for

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2 providing access to essential  
3 nutritional support for lower-income  
4 New Yorkers. We would like to make  
5 the following recommendations  
6 regarding the Farm Bill to insure that  
7 not only does the food stamp program  
8 provide sufficient nutritional  
9 support, but it also operates  
10 effectively, efficiently and uniformly  
11 with other USDA programs.

12 The key recommendations of the  
13 task force are to eliminate the time  
14 limits for able-bodied adults without  
15 dependent children, to eliminate the  
16 requirement for face-to-face  
17 interviews, to eliminate the five-year  
18 waiting period for elderly and  
19 survivors of domestic violence who are  
20 legal permanent residents, to  
21 eliminate the State option for  
22 finger-imaging of food stamp  
23 applicants, and to eliminate the cap  
24 on the excess total deductions for all  
25 food-stamp recipients, implement



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2 higher and/or tiered resource limits  
3 based on household size and raise  
4 benefit levels.

5 Eliminating time limits for  
6 able-bodied adults without dependent  
7 children who are vulnerable population  
8 in desperate need of added food stamps  
9 is in the government's best interests  
10 to support to this population and  
11 decrease administrative costs by  
12 eliminating the time limit.

13 Eliminating face-to-face  
14 interviews would halt or reduce the  
15 significant barrier to enrollment for  
16 many eligible nonparticipants working  
17 and disabled in life, as well as save  
18 large monies in administrative costs.

19 Also eliminating the five-year  
20 waiting period for elderly and  
21 survivors of domestic violence who are  
22 legal permanent residents would also  
23 alleviate an undue burden for  
24 administrators of the food stamp  
25 program in all of the training and the

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2 support that goes into the  
3 documentation as well as reduce the  
4 quality control errors that could  
5 arise.

6 In addition, finger-imaging has  
7 been shown to be a deterrent to  
8 prospective food stamp applications.  
9 State surveys and interviews have  
10 shown that as many as 15 percent of  
11 food stamp applicants express concern  
12 about finger-imaging. For certain  
13 applicants to the food stamp program  
14 the office visit necessary to complete  
15 finger-imaging poses an undue  
16 hardship. These include disabled and  
17 elderly and those who are employed  
18 during the hours that food stamp  
19 programs operate.

20 Other additional recommendations  
21 that could be made if one was to  
22 eliminate all of the expenses incurred  
23 by the ABOD and the finger-imaging is  
24 lifting the shelter tax. The data  
25 suggests that the shelter tax does not

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2 adequately reflect the high housing  
3 costs of the current high cost of  
4 living. Recent data has shown that in  
5 many parts of the country shelter  
6 costs over the past ten years have  
7 risen much higher than the rate on the  
8 cost of other expenses. Research by  
9 the Food Research and Action Council  
10 in 2001 showed that approximately 736  
11 households receive lower food stamp  
12 benefits because of the shelter  
13 reduction cap. Also higher resource  
14 limits. By eliminating participants'  
15 allowable resources, regardless of  
16 household size, you discourage savings  
17 for emergency, college education and  
18 for home ownership and retirement.

19 In conclusion, the task force  
20 firmly believes that the food stamp  
21 program should remain a Federally  
22 regulated program with administrative  
23 savings being accomplished through  
24 eliminating face-to-face interviews,  
25 finger-imaging, ABOD requirements and

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2 eliminating the five-year wait for  
3 some additional immigrants, enabling  
4 the program to increase participation  
5 by increasing the resource limits,  
6 lifting the shelter cap and raising  
7 benefit levels.

8 Thank you.

9 MS. MESICK: Thank you. I'm  
10 Edie Mesick. And my organization is  
11 the Nutrition Consortium of New York  
12 State. We're a state-wide anti-hunger  
13 organization. And I'd like to start  
14 by saying how proud I am of USDA and  
15 you, Under-Secretary Bost, for your  
16 repeated and consistent mantra that  
17 all eligible persons should have  
18 access to the food stamp program, and  
19 we are very grateful to you for your  
20 consistent message on the policies  
21 that have been adopted that seek to  
22 implement that message.

23 I want to start in looking at  
24 the question of the food stamp program  
25 and emphasize that the food stamp

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2 program works. That it has some very,  
3 very important features that must be  
4 retained in any look at  
5 reauthorization. So my first comment  
6 is that we should do no through the  
7 reauthorization. We should insure  
8 that there continues to be general  
9 eligibility for the food stamp program  
10 as opposed to targeted to only a  
11 certain population, women or children.  
12 There should be general eligibility,  
13 there should be -- continue to be a  
14 national design to the food stamp  
15 program, with national eligibility  
16 standards and implementation and there  
17 should continue to be an absolute  
18 focus in the food stamp program on  
19 access to food. In other words, it is  
20 a nutrition program and it should  
21 remain a nutrition program.

22 I do have four pages of  
23 testimony that I'll be leaving behind  
24 and I'm just going to briefly comment  
25 on some of these items, when we look

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2 at opportunities to improve access,  
3 because only 50 percent of people who  
4 are eligible for the food stamp  
5 program are participating. We would  
6 like to see USDA and Congress increase  
7 funding for food stamp program  
8 administration. It's meant to be,  
9 it's designed now at 50 percent share  
10 by the States. In New York State  
11 that's something like 40 percent.  
12 While we have some good intentions at  
13 the State level, our administration at  
14 the State level has some good policies  
15 to improve access to the program,  
16 there are many things we simply can't  
17 implement because there isn't enough  
18 money to fund improvements for example  
19 to our WMS system. So we would like  
20 to see an increase in Federal funding  
21 of food stamp program administration.

22 My next four comments I'm going  
23 to mention briefly, they deserve more  
24 detail and someone, Kathy Roberts will  
25 be speaking later about these specific

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2 items. We'd like to see the work  
3 requirements eliminated from this  
4 nutrition program. We'd like to see  
5 the asset limit raised to \$10,000 or  
6 eliminated entirely because the  
7 current asset level makes no sense and  
8 is a tremendous barrier to  
9 participation by people in need. We'd  
10 like to see a standard medical  
11 deduction established to have ease of  
12 administration or at least allow all  
13 medical expenses to be included for a  
14 food stamp budget consideration. And  
15 we must see food stamps provided to  
16 all otherwise eligible legal  
17 immigrants.

18 We at the Nutrition Consortium  
19 administer a state-wide food stamp  
20 outreach project and we urge that  
21 there be continuation of USDA's  
22 national campaign and USDA funding of  
23 food stamp administrative funding for  
24 outreach projects. We would like to  
25 see recertification services included

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2 in that outreach campaign because  
3 we're noticing that a lot of  
4 households that are participating  
5 really need assistance and end up  
6 going off of the food stamp program  
7 and then need to be assisted all over  
8 again, missing a month of benefits.

9 We'd like to see recertification  
10 allowed with outreach projects. Some  
11 more improvements we like to  
12 recommend. Eliminate the interview  
13 requirement for recertifying  
14 households. That's a cost savings.  
15 Extend from two years to four years  
16 recertification, the recertification  
17 for older adults without earned  
18 income. That's a big cost saving and  
19 a big hassle saving. We think it's  
20 absolutely essential that the USDA  
21 Department of Agriculture expand  
22 funding for EBT services at farmer's  
23 markets. We also want to see the  
24 continuation of incentive awards, we  
25 have some other specific



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2 recommendations that I'm not going to  
3 be able to go into. And thank you  
4 very much for listening today.

5 MR. CANAVAN: As I ask Matthew  
6 D'Arrigo to come to the mike, let me  
7 mention also for anybody who would be  
8 more comfortable speaking at their  
9 seat, my colleague is available in the  
10 back with a portable microphone.

11 Mr. D'Arrigo.

12 MR. D'ARRIGO: Thank you. And  
13 I'd like to thank you folks for coming  
14 up here and listening to us here  
15 today. My name is Matthew D'Arrigo.  
16 I am the president of the Hunts Point  
17 Terminal produce market. 50 companies  
18 there that distribute fresh fruits and  
19 vegetables to the metropolitan New  
20 York area. I am here in the capacity  
21 to represent the United Fresh Fruit  
22 and Vegetable Association. The main  
23 point of my remarks today are twofold.  
24 One is to expand the fresh fruit and  
25 vegetable snack program which is

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2 currently involved in 200 schools in  
3 eight states, and three Indian  
4 reservations, to go to all 50 states  
5 and cover all 100,000 schools in this  
6 country. The results of the snack  
7 program have been remarkably  
8 successful. Kids, when they have  
9 fruit and vegetables at their --  
10 nearby at school immediately start to  
11 use them more and more and use the  
12 vending machines for soda and chips  
13 much less. The alarming rate of  
14 childhood obesity, heart disease and  
15 other diseases related to bad diet in  
16 America can be helped tremendously by  
17 this.

18 The second point I have for you,  
19 which is also part of the same  
20 problem, is the Department of Defense  
21 spending. They have a fresh program  
22 for schools that the Department of  
23 Defense distributes all around the  
24 country. They favor small local  
25 produce suppliers and our doubling of

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2 that funding will aid the snack  
3 program tremendously.

4 I know I'm going to save a lot  
5 of time for you folks here because  
6 that's the only two things I have to  
7 day.

8 Thank you very much.

9 MR. CANAVAN: I have a question  
10 for you.

11 MR. D'ARRIGO: Yes?

12 MR. CANAVAN: Do you have any  
13 idea how much it would cost if you  
14 were to add the fresh fruit and  
15 vegetable program to 110,000 schools  
16 across the country?

17 MR. D'ARRIGO: I do not, but I  
18 know it's not going to happen tomorrow  
19 and it's going to happen  
20 incrementally. It's very, very  
21 successful right now in the 225  
22 schools and three Indian reservations,  
23 it's an absolute win right now.

24 MR. CANAVAN: Yes, we know how  
25 successful it is, but do you have any

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2 idea how much it would cost?

3 MR. D'ARRIGO: I do not.

4 MR. CANAVAN: Okay.

5 MR. D'ARRIGO: I would also  
6 respond to that, that the cost of  
7 heart disease and obesity and diabetes  
8 in our country would be higher.

9 MR. CANAVAN: Susan Prolman?

10 MS. PROLMAN: I am Susan  
11 Prolman, I'm here today with the Union  
12 of Concerned Scientists. Our food and  
13 environment program seeks to insure  
14 that food is produced in a safe and  
15 sustainable manner. The Union of  
16 Concerned Scientists strongly supports  
17 Title II conservation programs. And  
18 we would like to see greater funding  
19 for these programs. While we applaud  
20 Congress for authorizing appropriate  
21 levels of funding for Title II in the  
22 2002 Farm Bill, we have been  
23 consistently disappointed that the  
24 President's budget each year calls for  
25 funding conservation programs at far

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2 below the authorized levels. The  
3 Union of Concerned Scientists strongly  
4 supports the conservation security  
5 program as it was envisioned by  
6 Congress in the 2002 Farm Bill. We  
7 would like to see the USDA and  
8 Congress work together in the next  
9 farm bill to realize this vision. We  
10 believe that CSP will be an important  
11 program that provides significant  
12 geographically diverse conservation  
13 benefits when it is administered as a  
14 truly nationwide program with  
15 continuous open enrollment offering  
16 sufficient incentives for agricultural  
17 producers to employ ambitious and  
18 effective conservation practices. The  
19 Union of Concerned Scientists supports  
20 farm bill conservation programs only  
21 insofar as they are used to produce  
22 conservation benefits. We believe  
23 that the environmental quality  
24 incentives program supports many  
25 beneficial projects but under current

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2 rules we are concerned that  
3 significant amounts of EQUIP funds can  
4 go to pay for projects that are  
5 potentially environmentally  
6 devastating such as building manure  
7 lagoons at large concentrated animal  
8 feeding operations. We urge the USDA  
9 and Congress to work together towards  
10 EQUIP in the 2007 Farm Bill that is a  
11 true conservation program. The Union  
12 of Concerned Scientists strongly  
13 supports grass-fed and grass-finished  
14 production system for beef cattle,  
15 dairy cows, swine and poultry. We  
16 support increased funding for existing  
17 programs that support producers of  
18 grass-fed and grass-finished animal  
19 products, including research programs  
20 and value-added programs and extension  
21 and outreach programs. We support  
22 providing assistance for practices  
23 such as rotational grazing through SCP  
24 and EQUIP. The Union of Concerned  
25 Scientists advocates for a more

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2 responsible approach to antibiotic use  
3 in animal agriculture. The GAO has  
4 stated that antibiotic use in animals  
5 in the United States could become a  
6 trade problem in the future with the  
7 European Union, Canada and possibly  
8 other countries. We would like to see  
9 the USDA work together with Congress  
10 to provide assistance to those  
11 producers employing a more sustainable  
12 approach to antibiotic use in animal  
13 agriculture and also to the producers  
14 seeking to transition towards more  
15 sustainable use. It is of great  
16 importance to both human and animal  
17 health for the USDA to do a better job  
18 of collecting data on antibiotic use  
19 in animal agriculture and also of  
20 monitoring for antimicrobial  
21 resistance. Research to aid would  
22 reduce antibiotic use in animal  
23 agriculture is needed. Finally, the  
24 Union of Concerned Scientists  
25 recommends that the USDA work together

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2 with Congress to encourage competition  
3 and insure fair business practices by  
4 taking measures including support in  
5 country of origin labeling and  
6 prohibiting packer-owned livestock.

7 I thank you very much for this  
8 opportunity to present comments and we  
9 will be submitting more lengthy  
10 written comments in the near future.

11 Thank you.

12 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you,  
13 Ms. Prolman.

14 Before I ask Mr. Hokanson to  
15 rise to the microphone, could I ask  
16 Secretary Yolanda Zias-Santano to come  
17 down to the microphone area.

18 Secretary Charles Kuparus. Ruth  
19 Moore. Joel Berg.

20 MR. CANAVAN: Mr. Hokanson?

21 MR. HOKANSON: Under-Secretary  
22 Bost, other USDA officials, my name is  
23 Bob Hokanson. I'm national affairs  
24 coordinator with New York Farm Bureau.  
25 And I am providing comments fort this



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2 listening forum represent New York  
3 Farm Bureau and our president, Mr.  
4 John Lincoln. I want to preface my  
5 remarks today, Mr. Bost, by indicating  
6 we're going to talk about two items.  
7 One of them is the specific food  
8 program that New York Farm Bureau is  
9 very supportive of. But I also wanted  
10 to provide the panel a little sense or  
11 feel of opportunities that Farm Bureau  
12 feels that is necessary for our next  
13 generation of farmers.

14 Mr. Bost, you spoke of  
15 opportunities with the food stamp  
16 program and nutritional values and we  
17 feel that opportunities are needed for  
18 our next generation of farmers. I  
19 want to preface my remarks to that.

20 Thank you for providing the  
21 opportunity to hear comments from New  
22 York Farm Bureau regarding the  
23 upcoming 2007 Farm Bill. New York  
24 Farm Bureau will be providing written  
25 comments to the USDA series of

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2 questions prior to the December  
3 30,2005 deadline. Nevertheless, we  
4 would like to take this opportunity to  
5 comment on one specific program, the  
6 WIC farmers' market nutrition program,  
7 that's extremely important to  
8 consumers in New York City, consumers  
9 throughout the state, as well as to  
10 many of our Farm Bureau members. And  
11 we would like to take this opportunity  
12 to provide a few comments regarding  
13 the importance of a viable and dynamic  
14 agriculture industry in providing  
15 opportunities for the upcoming  
16 generation to enter production  
17 agriculture and thus insure food  
18 security for the American consumer.

19 First, the farmers' market  
20 nutrition program provides  
21 opportunities to low-income  
22 nutritionally at-risk families  
23 enrolled in the special supplemental  
24 nutrition program for WIC and senior  
25 nutrition programs. The purpose of

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2 the program is to promote improved  
3 nutrition through increased  
4 consumption of locally grown fresh  
5 fruits and vegetables and to expand  
6 sales at farmers' markets. We offer  
7 strong support to the WIC farmers'  
8 market nutrition program that has been  
9 such a success in New York State. Not  
10 only to consumers but to farmers who  
11 market their locally grown nutritious  
12 and fresh produce through local  
13 farmers' markets. However, to improve  
14 the program and to provide a broader  
15 array of locally grown farm products  
16 that would increase consumer  
17 participation in the program, New York  
18 Farm Bureau requests that the produce  
19 eligible for the program be expanded  
20 to include three more products, all  
21 produced by our local farmers: Honey,  
22 eggs and apple cider. We feel that  
23 the addition of these products could  
24 increase the nutritional base of  
25 consumers who use the FMNP. In

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2 addition, the broader selection of  
3 products available would obviously  
4 increase consumption of such products  
5 which in turn would encourage more  
6 frequent use of the FMNP and encourage  
7 the expanded use of fruits and  
8 vegetables throughout the year through  
9 a WIC program as well. These  
10 additional products are all locally  
11 and regionally grown in New York and  
12 are nutritious and are in demand by  
13 consumers. Incorporation of such  
14 products into the program we feel  
15 would not only provide benefits as  
16 indicated to consumers but would also  
17 provide our farmer-producers with a  
18 broader range of marketing options for  
19 their produce.

20 Another important issue facing  
21 agriculture that I'd like to address  
22 is making sure that the next  
23 generation of potential farmers have  
24 viable opportunities to enter  
25 agricultural production. As many of

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2 you know, the average age in 2002 of a  
3 farmer was 55 years old, and that  
4 number continues to increase.

5 Obviously, there needs to be  
6 opportunities to encourage young  
7 people to enter farming in order to  
8 maintain our food-producing  
9 capabilities as a nation.

10 We want to make sure that there  
11 are financial incentives and tax  
12 benefits to encourage the transfer of  
13 farms to the next generation and, most  
14 importantly, we need to make sure that  
15 there are willing potential farmers to  
16 offer such opportunities to. I  
17 propose that a key component to insure  
18 that potential young farmers are  
19 willing to enter farming is to make  
20 sure that entry into farming is not  
21 limited by unwarranted restrictions or  
22 limitations on expansion and/or  
23 innovative production or marketing  
24 opportunities on farms.

25 In order to attract potential

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2 young farmers and their transition  
3 into active young farmers,  
4 opportunities to expand both in size  
5 and innovative opportunities in  
6 marketing and production need to be  
7 present. To constrict such  
8 opportunities to potential young  
9 farmers by unwarranted regulation  
10 regarding expansion of farming  
11 operations, whether in size  
12 restrictions or in limiting innovative  
13 agriculture production techniques  
14 would effectively limit entry of  
15 progressive potential young farmers as  
16 our industry's farmers of the next  
17 generation.

18 As we begin to debate the  
19 opportunities in the direction of the  
20 2007 Farm Bill, we must make certain  
21 that we do not over-regulate or limit  
22 the size and innovative opportunities  
23 of agriculture to the extent that  
24 entry into farming is not viewed as an  
25 exciting opportunity by such potential

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2 young farmers.

3 Thank you for the opportunity to  
4 present these comments.

5 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you,  
6 Mr. Hokanson.

7 Secretary Yolanda Zias-Santano?

8 MS. ZIAS-SANTANO: Good morning.

9 I am Yolanda Zias, secretary of the  
10 Department of Interior of the  
11 Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. With me  
12 is Edwardo Colon, administrator of the  
13 administration for the socio-economic  
14 development of (inaudible).

15 First I would like to express  
16 our deep concern for all the evacuees  
17 of the affected states by Hurricanes  
18 Katrina and Rita. We in Puerto Rico  
19 are more than willing to do everything  
20 within our power to help these  
21 victims. We have already received  
22 around 100 families in Puerto Rico.

23 Mr. Under-Secretary Eric Bost,  
24 Mrs. Yvette Jackson, regional  
25 administrator mid-Atlantic region,

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2 attendees of the forum, nutrition  
3 forum, Puerto Rico with 3.9 million  
4 residents in 3,500 square miles has a  
5 higher average population density than  
6 any U.S. state and higher than most  
7 countries in the world. More than  
8 1,100 persons per square mile. One of  
9 the principal reasons for the  
10 tremendous population growth has been  
11 a decline in the death rate. In the  
12 U.S. Census Bureau, there are 585,701  
13 inhabitants over 60 years old, which  
14 is 13.4 of the Puerto Rican  
15 population. Single mothers run 32  
16 percent of the households in Puerto  
17 Rico while 19 percent of pregnancies  
18 are women between the ages of 12 and  
19 19 years old. In addition, more than  
20 75 percent of families that are headed  
21 by females live below the poverty  
22 level. According to the Puerto Rico  
23 Planning Board in March 2004, the  
24 annual income per capita was estimated  
25 at \$10,477. This figures compares to



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2 nearly one-third of the average per  
3 capita income on the U.S. mainland and  
4 about half that of Mississippi, the  
5 poorest state. The 2000 census  
6 revealed that 44.6 percent of Puerto  
7 Ricans are below the poverty line  
8 compared to 11.3 percent on the  
9 mainland. As a comparison, in order  
10 to be eligible for NAP benefits in  
11 Puerto Rico's household with four  
12 members will average \$667 as a monthly  
13 income, whereas in the U.S.  
14 counterpart we have an income of  
15 \$2,403. We amended the NAP  
16 regulations of the year 2004  
17 increasing the benefits of the elderly  
18 and disabled participants, a Social  
19 Security income of 50 percent is  
20 considered now for persons 60 years  
21 old or disabled as long as it is their  
22 only source of income. As a result of  
23 this amendment, the impact of benefits  
24 distributed to the participants from  
25 December 2003 to May 2005 increased

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2 approximately by \$11,000,000. This  
3 represents an increase in benefits  
4 received by 145,000 elderly or  
5 disabled families. Regarding the  
6 electronic benefit transfer, we were  
7 able to get low income families into  
8 the technology financial system. We  
9 also voided undetected fraud in the  
10 authorized retailers with the creation  
11 of an antifraud line to report  
12 possible irregularities. We also  
13 established FINANCO (phonetic), a  
14 Spanish acronym for at-home action and  
15 nutrition program, an educational  
16 program that creates awareness among  
17 NAP participants regarding proper use  
18 of their benefits and increase their  
19 knowledge in nutrition areas in order  
20 to adopt healthier eating habits and  
21 active life styles. In terms of the  
22 emergency food assistance program, we  
23 would like to increase the number of  
24 food distributions per year to the  
25 families of extreme poverty. The

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2 fiscal impact on this increase will be  
3 translated to \$1,360,000. In terms of  
4 our recommendations, we recommend  
5 establishing a floor for NAP grant  
6 program. In fiscal year '82, the  
7 first year of the NAP program, the NAP  
8 grant authorized by Congress was  
9 \$825,000,000 or about eight percent of  
10 the 10.3 billion food stamp program  
11 nationwide. This was a decline from  
12 8.5 percent from the previous year.  
13 In fiscal year 2003 the NAP share food  
14 stamp expenditure was 6.6 percent,  
15 falling in fiscal year 2005 to 5.7  
16 percent of the food stamp program.  
17 Over the life of the NAP program, its  
18 share food stamp funding has fallen by  
19 33 percent. This decline share of the  
20 food stamp program has provided budget  
21 savings of \$70,000,000,000 to the  
22 Federal government, but it has also  
23 caused a loss of purchasing power for  
24 the poorest families with children,  
25 the elderly and the disabled across

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2 Puerto Rico to purchase meat, bread,  
3 rice and beans. By not keeping pace  
4 with the food stamp program, the  
5 Commonwealth is forced to have income  
6 eligibility requirements in Puerto  
7 Rico stricter than they are in the  
8 States or even in the Virgin Islands,  
9 a few miles offshore from Puerto Rico.  
10 Furthermore, when comparing the  
11 benefits of a level to similar income  
12 groups, the benefits available in  
13 Puerto Rico are less than either the  
14 States or the Virgin Islands. The  
15 Commonwealth is very concerned about  
16 this continuing decline of the share  
17 of resources. And we believe that it  
18 is extremely important to bring this  
19 decline to an end and to start the  
20 reverse of this trend. The  
21 Commonwealth urges that USDA to  
22 include to proposal in its drafting of  
23 the 2007 Farm Bill. First, to  
24 establish a floor so that the NAP  
25 program will not be less than 5.7

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2 percent of the food stamp program,  
3 and, second, to implement and increase  
4 the floor over the life of the Farm  
5 Bill from .3 to .6 percent until it  
6 reaches 8 percent of the benefit  
7 expenditure for food stamp. Taking  
8 this approach will provide a pathway  
9 to restore the purchasing power of  
10 families who relied on the NAP to the  
11 point where they were in 1982 when the  
12 program was established. The  
13 Commonwealth looks forward to working  
14 with the Department in strengthening  
15 the NAP program so that the families  
16 with children, senior and the disabled  
17 have a stronger sense of food security  
18 in Puerto Rico.

19 Thank you so much. We will  
20 submit later on a more detailed  
21 document.

22 Thank you.

23 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you, Madam  
24 Secretary.

25 Secretary Charles Kuperus?

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2 Good to see you.

3 MR. KUPERUS: Yeah, it's good to  
4 be here. And Under-Secretary, you  
5 need to know we can add one more truck  
6 to those 300 -- over 300 trucks you  
7 sent to the folks affected by  
8 Hurricane Katrina. We have volunteers  
9 today, farmers willing to give up some  
10 of their apples in order to give them  
11 to those folks, and volunteers today  
12 picking them so tomorrow another  
13 truckload is going down there. So you  
14 can add that to the over 300.

15 Under-Secretary, we really  
16 appreciate you coming out and  
17 listening to us in this region of the  
18 country. It's really important and  
19 it's good that you chose the New  
20 York-New Jersey metro area to come and  
21 listen about nutrition. I have some  
22 prepared comments and I'm going to  
23 read through them so I make sure I  
24 cover everything.

25 But certainly, as New Jersey's

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2 Secretary of Agriculture, I've urged  
3 our staff in the department to be ever  
4 mindful of how these nutrition issues  
5 play a vital role in the viability of  
6 our state's agriculture and the  
7 success of our young people.

8 Accordingly, this past summer we've  
9 adopted regulations that provide for  
10 the most comprehensive school  
11 nutrition policy in the nation,  
12 covering all grade levels, from pre-K  
13 through high school. And by September  
14 of 2007 New Jersey schools will  
15 replace high-sugar, high-fat foods  
16 with more nutritious fare, including  
17 more fresh fruits and vegetables,  
18 whole grains and other nutritious  
19 foods. By instilling good nutrition  
20 habits in our young people today, and  
21 encouraging them to adopt a life style  
22 of eating right and moving more, we  
23 can insure that good food choices they  
24 learn now will help shape the  
25 preference of nutritious for a

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2 lifetime.

3 Under-Secretary, we appreciate  
4 your support in that regard.

5 However, good nutrition isn't  
6 just a message for our young people.  
7 We also must keep in mind the other  
8 end of the spectrum, senior citizens  
9 who do not always have good -- have  
10 access to ready good nutritious foods,  
11 according to -- including fresh fruits  
12 and vegetables, which can aid in  
13 keeping them healthier. I believe  
14 this one area where we can and should  
15 do more through food nutrition  
16 service. In New Jersey we've seen  
17 great growth over the past several  
18 years in our community farmers'  
19 markets. We now have more than 75, 24  
20 new ones in the past three years,  
21 which provide a shorter link between  
22 our farmers and our residents. Many  
23 of these are located in urban areas  
24 where there are few grocery stores  
25 nearby and opportunities to buy fresh



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2 produce are therefore limited. The  
3 inclusion of senior farmer market  
4 nutrition programs has helped spur the  
5 growth of these markets throughout our  
6 state. Concurrently, there's been  
7 steady growth in the number of senior  
8 citizens in our state as well. There  
9 are now more than 1.5 million people  
10 in New Jersey over the age of 60. And  
11 research shows us that approximately  
12 eight percent live at or below the  
13 poverty level. Concurrently, only  
14 35,000 seniors in our state are  
15 enrolled in the senior farmers' market  
16 nutrition program and each is allowed  
17 only to receive \$20 per year in  
18 certificates redeemable at these  
19 farmers' markets. With USDA's  
20 proposed rule change, increasing that  
21 to \$50 a year, that proposed increase  
22 bodes well for the program's future,  
23 but we shouldn't stop there. Clearly,  
24 more funds are needed for this program  
25 nationwide. For fiscal year 2005 a

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2 total of 15,000,000 was allocated to  
3 the senior farmers' market nutrition  
4 program. That averages just \$300,000  
5 per state. The question is where this  
6 additional funds would come from. I  
7 would contend that you must look at  
8 the prevention issue, just as you  
9 would view regular blood screening,  
10 blood pressure screenings or cancer  
11 testing. The evidence is clear that  
12 good nutrition is a key contributor to  
13 good health. Inclusion of more fresh  
14 fruits and vegetables in a diet will  
15 improve the health of our seniors and  
16 us all. And the resulting savings in  
17 health care can fund the increase of  
18 the senior farmers' market nutrition  
19 program. Expanding the fresh fruits  
20 and vegetable program nationwide would  
21 be another good move. Another area  
22 where savings could be achieved across  
23 the variety of programs is  
24 transportation costs associated with  
25 moving commodities into position to

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2 being distributed. The concept of  
3 food miles is receiving more and more  
4 attention from both government  
5 agencies and the media these days. In  
6 a nutshell, food miles refers to the  
7 distance you move food from its point  
8 of origin to the market. With fuel  
9 costs rising rapidly, reducing food  
10 miles becomes an essential way of  
11 reining in the overall cost of  
12 bringing food from the farm to the  
13 table. Rapole (phonetic) Center for  
14 Sustainable Agricultural at Iowa State  
15 University recently researched food  
16 miles for 16 different fruits and  
17 vegetables. They found that 16  
18 Iowa-grown crops traveled a total of  
19 716 miles to get to market, compared  
20 to 25,300 miles for the same product  
21 to be brought from a typical  
22 out-of-state source. With fuel prices  
23 the way they are these days, we can  
24 only imagine the additional cost of  
25 transportation. Therefore, it would

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2 be wise for the food nutrition service  
3 to adopt a policy of local first,  
4 regional second, national and  
5 international third. Instead of  
6 buying commodities on the national  
7 scale and paying the high costs for  
8 their distribution to various points,  
9 local agencies should be empowered to  
10 follow a local-regional-national-  
11 international approach by which they  
12 buy commodities locally first. If a  
13 specific item is not available  
14 locally, they should move to buying it  
15 regionally. Secondly, as a last  
16 resort, and only last resort, if the  
17 commodity cannot be obtained  
18 regionally, move to buying it from an  
19 area where it must be transported a  
20 longer distance. But keeping the cost  
21 of food miles low through a  
22 buy-locally-first approach, many food  
23 nutrition programs from the emergency  
24 food assistance program to the  
25 commodities supplemental food program

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2 will help reach even more recipients  
3 and increase food buys that will help  
4 more folks. For example, New Jersey  
5 purchases through the Department of  
6 Defense contract quantities of certain  
7 products for our school nutrition  
8 program, including frozen peaches,  
9 blueberry cups that come from our  
10 local farms. Jersey fresh produce.  
11 These local buying -- this local  
12 buying dramatically cuts  
13 transportation costs while creating a  
14 new market for our farmers.

15 In closing, expanding the number  
16 of recipients for these vital feeding  
17 programs need not only mean dramatic  
18 increase in cost, by concentrating on  
19 locally first, reducing food miles,  
20 and stressing good nutrition at all  
21 ages, to reduce medical cost, we  
22 should be able to realize the savings  
23 needed to add more recipients to these  
24 programs.

25 Clearly, the health of our

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2 population is a vital point of  
3 discussion in national policy. The  
4 Farm Bill, the sound nutrition  
5 programs, should be one of those  
6 avenues through which we pursue that  
7 goal. Good nutrition enhanced by  
8 buying these products locally from our  
9 farmers should be the cornerstone of  
10 our next Farm Bill. With the right  
11 approaches we can provide sustenance  
12 for our residents while sustaining our  
13 region's farmers.

14 MR. CANAVAN: Ruth Moore?

15 MS. MOORE: Good morning. My  
16 name is Ruth Moore and I'm the First  
17 Deputy Commission at the New York  
18 State Department of Agriculture and  
19 Markets. I'm here today representing  
20 Commission Nathan Rudgers, who sends  
21 his greetings, Under-Secretary Bost,  
22 to you and all of your colleagues.  
23 Welcome to New York.

24 MR. BOST: Thank you.

25 MS. MOORE: I'll be speaking

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2 primarily this morning about the senior  
3 farmers' market nutrition program and  
4 the EBT program in our farmers'  
5 market.

6 As you know, the highly  
7 cost-effective senior farmers' market  
8 nutrition program provides low-income  
9 seniors with checks for purchasing  
10 nutritious locally grown fresh fruits  
11 and vegetables at farmers' market.

12 This year approximately 91,000  
13 low-income New York seniors are  
14 benefitting from this program, along  
15 with nearly 900 farmers at 325  
16 farmers' markets in all 62 of the  
17 state's counties, including 74 markets  
18 in New York City here. We're pleased  
19 that the food and nutrition service is  
20 developing regulations for the program  
21 that will insure its orderly operation  
22 and baseline funding to State agency  
23 grantees, while providing the  
24 potential for program growth, and both  
25 our department and the New York State

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2 Office for the Aging have submitted  
3 written technical comments on the  
4 proposed regulations for  
5 consideration.

6 Now, while the program is very  
7 popular with farmers and seniors, as  
8 you know, it's reaching only a limited  
9 percentage of eligible participants  
10 with the current level of funding. We  
11 would welcome the opportunity to be  
12 able to provide benefits to unserved  
13 low-income seniors if additional funds  
14 can be identified.

15 One source of additional funding  
16 that you might consider to maintain  
17 current caseloads and possibly expand  
18 the reach of the program would be the  
19 re-allocation of the small percentage  
20 of program funds returned annually by  
21 states to FNS for use in the  
22 subsequent year. We also would ask  
23 that in weighing the costs of serving  
24 more seniors, that you take into  
25 account the very real savings to



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2 society and government programs from  
3 improved senior health as well as the  
4 economic support that the program  
5 provides to our farm families.

6 We also want to thank FNS for  
7 supporting the wireless electronic  
8 benefits transfer or EBT project in  
9 dozens of our farmers' markets here in  
10 New York. We want to thank you in  
11 particular, Under-Secretary Bost, for  
12 enthusiastically attending the  
13 kick-off events in Rochester and in  
14 New York City.

15 We're pleased to report that  
16 this special project has succeeded in  
17 demonstrating that wireless EBT  
18 technology can support easy, reliable  
19 and virtually instantaneous  
20 transactions that are on a par with  
21 wired terminal transactions from  
22 grocery stores. We see the EBT  
23 project as an exciting and significant  
24 new opportunity for FNS and State  
25 agencies to help energize the food

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2 stamp program by inaugurating or  
3 expanding operation at farmers'  
4 markets where locally grown fresh  
5 produce is abundant and where  
6 nutrition messages can convey the  
7 health benefits of fresh produce as  
8 part of the new My Pyramid campaign.

9 Therefore, we're recommending  
10 consideration of funding for the  
11 farmers' market wireless EBT program  
12 within the food stamp program for the  
13 benefit of food stamp recipients and  
14 for the benefit of thousands of small  
15 farmers who will then be able to  
16 market their fresh produce directly to  
17 the food stamp recipients. To  
18 maximize the successful outcomes of  
19 the program, we're also recommending  
20 that any projects funded should  
21 incorporate effective promotion as  
22 well as nutrition education support  
23 through the food stamp nutrition  
24 education program.

25 I want to thank USDA for its

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2 work with the Department of Defense  
3 with respect to providing fresh  
4 produce and vegetables through the DOD  
5 fresh program, it's been a valuable  
6 component of our farm-to-school  
7 program and we're urging continued and  
8 robust funding of the program as  
9 currently authorized.

10 Finally, I want to echo  
11 Secretary Kuperus' remarks, that we  
12 appreciate you choosing the New  
13 York-New Jersey-metro area for this  
14 nutrition forum. But also would like  
15 to invite you back with Secretary  
16 Johans to discuss other very important  
17 topics coming up in the 2007 Farm Bill  
18 that are important to our,000 farmers  
19 and our 19,000,000 consumers.

20 Thank you.

21 MR. CANAVAN: Before I ask Joel  
22 Byrd to step to the microphone, could  
23 I please ask Seth Diamond, Kathy  
24 Youngers, Gus Youngers and Shana  
25 McLure-Barry to approach the

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2 microphone area.

3 MR. BYRD: Good morning. First  
4 of all, any praise for Under-Secretary  
5 Bost doesn't come out of the five  
6 minutes, correct?

7 Thank you for coming back to New  
8 York. Thank you for your leadership.  
9 Thank you for your wisdom and some  
10 great hiring decisions, proving you're  
11 nonpartisan in the whole effort.  
12 Thank you for your grant to New York  
13 City to increase food stamp access.  
14 I've submitted not shockingly  
15 detailed eight-page testimony with  
16 wider details. So I'm just going to  
17 focus on a few big themes today.

18 Now I'll put on my timer here.

19 I ask you first of all to  
20 consider that we're in the Alexander  
21 Hamilton Building, named after a man  
22 who died in a gang feud. So when the  
23 newspaper he founded, the New York  
24 Post, lectures low-income people on  
25 their supposed personal

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2 irresponsibility for being welfare  
3 recipients engaged in fraud simply  
4 because they get food stamps to help  
5 feed their families when they're not  
6 paid enough to feed their families, we  
7 ought to really thing about what  
8 personal responsibility means today.

9 Second of all, I want to point  
10 out, as all of you know, we're just a  
11 few blocks from the Ground Zero of  
12 September 11th, and as we've all seen  
13 over the last few weeks, there are a  
14 lot of Ground Zeros of poverty and  
15 hunger and food insecurity throughout  
16 this country. Some people act  
17 shocked, they just learned of this in  
18 the last few weeks, I think all of us  
19 in this room know it's happened for  
20 years and years and years.

21 Here in New York City there was  
22 a 100,000-person jump in poverty last  
23 year. There are now 1.8 million New  
24 Yorkers living under the poverty line.  
25 That's one in five New Yorkers. If

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2 welfare reform and the economic plans  
3 of our Federal, State and local  
4 policies are working so goodnessly  
5 well, why are more people under the  
6 poverty line?

7 Why, according to the Community  
8 Service Society, was there a drop in  
9 wages for the lowest income third of  
10 workers over the last five years at  
11 the same time the corporate executive  
12 profits skyrocketed here in  
13 nationwide, what used to be a rising  
14 tide lifted all boats? Now a rising  
15 tide lifts the yachts and sinks the  
16 rowboats in their wake.

17 Now, what does this have to do  
18 with the Farm Bill? A great deal.  
19 You'd think with all these problems we  
20 have entitlement programs here in New  
21 York City, they would be used to the  
22 hilt. You would think with nationwide  
23 food stamp participation is nearer to  
24 store time, we would be there in New  
25 York City. Unfortunately, you'd be

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2 wrong. Here in New York City there  
3 are 268,441 more people receiving food  
4 stamps than when Mayor Bloomberg took  
5 office in 2002. That is great. But,  
6 there are still hundreds of thousands  
7 of people fewer receiving food stamps  
8 today than just ten years ago, despite  
9 the rise in poverty. We are below the  
10 national average in WIC participation.  
11 We are below the national average in  
12 school lunch and school breakfast  
13 participation. We are below the  
14 national average in most  
15 nutrition-assistance programs.

16 Now, people here have become  
17 used to me criticizing the City, and  
18 it's no secret we think the City  
19 should do a much better job with  
20 increasing access. But it is a  
21 vicious cycle of Federal law, State  
22 regulations and City policy that heap  
23 upon each other. We need to just not  
24 make incremental improvements in the  
25 Farm Bill. We need to dramatically

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2 change the whole way these programs  
3 are structured. Focusing the food  
4 stamps program's performance almost  
5 exclusively on the error rate. It's  
6 really a focus on whether states and  
7 localities fill out paperwork the  
8 right way, not whether fewer people  
9 are hungry or not. We should scrap  
10 error rate, and as you know, we talk  
11 about old error rates determines  
12 whether people are properly denied or  
13 accepted. They do not determine  
14 whether someone was turned away from  
15 the office impermissibly in the first  
16 place. So you can just turn people  
17 away right and left and USDA -- the  
18 USDA statistics will never show that.  
19 I suggest that happens in New York  
20 City.

21 Today in New York City, as you  
22 know, Federal law says -- you know  
23 better than anybody,  
24 Mr. Under-Secretary, Federal law says  
25 you must get food stamps within 30



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2 days. And the law's the law, right?  
3 The law's the law. If I'm a food  
4 stamps recipient and I use my food  
5 stamps to get diapers, I'm off. I  
6 miss an interview, I may be sick that  
7 day, I didn't contact the agency, I  
8 miss my interview, I'm off the  
9 program. But I'm a Federal -- I am  
10 the City agency and time after time,  
11 according to their own statistics, on  
12 their own web site, one in ten  
13 families aren't getting food stamps  
14 within 30 days, nothing happens to  
15 them. We need to restructure the whole  
16 program, we need to scrap these  
17 conflicting eligibility requirements,  
18 create food entitlement accounts that  
19 combine the food stamps program, the  
20 WIC program, the school meals program,  
21 one eligibility requirement at 185  
22 percent of poverty, less paperwork,  
23 less bureaucracy, more compassion and  
24 conservatism, and more help for  
25 low-income families, and we could pay

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2 for it by scrapping the corporate  
3 welfare throughout the Farm Bill and  
4 scrapping tax cuts for the mega rich,  
5 so the rising tide really does lift  
6 all boats and we don't have hunger in  
7 New Orleans, New York, Appalachia or  
8 anywhere in America.

9 Thank you.

10 MR. CANAVAN: Seth Diamond?

11 MR. DIAMOND: Thank you. Good  
12 morning. It's always hard to follow  
13 Joel, and I've done it more times than  
14 I care to --

15 Good morning again. And it's  
16 good to see all of you and I've  
17 enjoyed working with you all over the  
18 past several years. My name is Seth  
19 Diamond, Executive Deputy Commissioner  
20 of the Human Resources Administration,  
21 and I am pleased to be here today to  
22 discuss the City's food stamp program,  
23 strong record of accomplishment over  
24 the past four years, and our  
25 suggestions for how a new Farm Bill

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2 can allow us to continue that  
3 progress.

4 The Human Resources  
5 Administration has worked hard to  
6 insure that all eligible New Yorkers  
7 who want food stamps have access to  
8 benefits. We have improved access by  
9 simplifying the application process  
10 and improving the efficiency of our  
11 offices. We have worked with  
12 community-based organizations to help  
13 reach into the City's neighborhoods  
14 and screen people for eligibility for  
15 food stamps. In partnership with the  
16 State, we have used automation to both  
17 open food stamp cases for those  
18 receiving SSI and living alone and to  
19 allow more food stamps to continue  
20 when individuals leave public  
21 assistance for work.

22 Our efforts have been targeted  
23 to insuring New Yorkers realize that  
24 food stamps is not end in itself, but  
25 a support to assist individuals and

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2 families in their effort to gain their  
3 highest level of self-sufficiency.

4 Unlike the situation ten years  
5 ago, today almost twice as many people  
6 receive food stamps alone as receive  
7 food stamps combined with cash  
8 assistance.

9 The fast-growing segment of the  
10 food stamp population are those  
11 receiving food stamps independent of  
12 cash assistance and SSI. This group,  
13 many of whom are working, has almost  
14 doubled from 220,000 in January 2002  
15 to 433,000 today. Many of the 433,000  
16 have recently left welfare and are  
17 using food stamps to provide  
18 additional assistance in their new  
19 jobs.

20 In other cases, the additional  
21 assistance provided by food stamps may  
22 allow families to remain off public  
23 assistance. Whatever the specific  
24 circumstances of those receiving food  
25 stamps, we recognize that for many

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2 families food assistance is critical  
3 to their ability to gain  
4 self-sufficiency and lead healthy,  
5 productive lives.

6 Overall in New York City, more  
7 than 1,000,000 New Yorkers receive  
8 food stamps. This represents a  
9 33-percent increase since January  
10 2002. Of this total, over 600,000  
11 people receive food stamps alone, an  
12 increase of over 70 percent since  
13 January 2002.

14 The City has had substantial  
15 increases while still maintaining an  
16 even increasing the quality of our  
17 work. For the last Federal fiscal  
18 year, New York City had its lower  
19 error rate in the history of the  
20 program. We were pleased recently  
21 when you, Under-Secretary Bost, came  
22 to New York to present the State with  
23 a check for 2.8 million dollars for  
24 improvements the City and State have  
25 made in insuring it is properly

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2 processing food stamps cases.

3 We were also pleased when you  
4 returned, Under-Secretary Bost, to New  
5 York recently to present the City a  
6 check for almost \$1,000,000 for an  
7 innovative program we submitted to  
8 develop an on-line application system.

9 This grant represents a  
10 partnership with Food Change, one of  
11 the City's not-for-profit  
12 organizations, to use technology to  
13 bring the food stamp application to  
14 the City soup kitchens.

15 Also involved in the grant is  
16 the New York City Coalition Against  
17 Hunger, headed by Joel Berg, which  
18 will work to assist food pantries in  
19 this effort.

20 The on-line process when fully  
21 developed will both improve access to  
22 the system and by having an electronic  
23 application and record storage, allow  
24 us to, the City to more efficiently  
25 process food stamp applications.

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2 We want to continue to make food  
3 stamps available to those who are  
4 eligible. We also would like to be  
5 able to streamline many of the food  
6 stamp processes, both as a benefit to  
7 those we serve and to insure at a time  
8 of limited resources we can  
9 efficiently serve our increase in case  
10 loads.

11 With that in mind, I would like  
12 to turn to some specific suggestions  
13 in the Farm Bill.

14 The 2002 Farm Bill food stamp  
15 revisions gave states a variety of new  
16 options to simplify the program,  
17 making it more accessible and better  
18 coordinated with child-care and  
19 Medicare for eligible families. We'd  
20 like to continue that effort and are  
21 against any changes in the program  
22 that would add unneeded complexity  
23 which would burden those administering  
24 the program and those we serve.

25 We support giving states and

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2 localities additional flexibility to  
3 simplify and align various program  
4 requirements and to implement uniform  
5 rules for means-tested benefit  
6 programs such as food stamps, TANAF  
7 and Medicaid. This would provide a  
8 number of benefits such as enabling us  
9 to streamline and coordinate data  
10 collection requirements, and  
11 increasing the food stamp resource  
12 limit for the elderly in excess of the  
13 \$3,000 to \$5,000 and the minimum  
14 benefit amount for elderly from \$10 to  
15 \$50.

16 Further simplification options  
17 would include extending the  
18 transitional benefit option to six  
19 months, to allow more families to  
20 continue to receive food stamps rather  
21 than five months, and excluding from  
22 countable income any subsidies that  
23 support families as they care for  
24 foster children, adopt children or  
25 serve as guardians for children.



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2           Given the scope of the program  
3 we are trying to administer, HRA also  
4 strongly opposed proposed budget cuts  
5 to the food stamp programming in this  
6 year's budget.

7           The City urges amending food  
8 stamp program rules to protect  
9 localities from complex changes in  
10 alien eligibility rules. We would  
11 suggest there should be an 18-month  
12 hold harmless period for errors  
13 relating to implementation of new  
14 rules following each change in  
15 non-citizenship eligibility criteria.

16           The 50-percent historic State  
17 Federal max for administrative costs  
18 to the food stamp program was reduced  
19 in many states by cost allocation  
20 changes in the Agricultural Research  
21 Act from 1998. This 50-percent max  
22 should be restored and a 75-percent  
23 Federal share should be instituted for  
24 urgent and beneficial changes at the  
25 State level, including automation and

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2 program simplification changes.

3 In addition, there should be a  
4 75-percent Federal share for EBT costs  
5 which have removed the stigma of  
6 participation in the program and made  
7 it easier to participate albeit  
8 beneath the store and food stamp  
9 programs, and made it easier to  
10 monitor expenditures.

11 The new Farm Bill should amend  
12 the Food Stamp Act of 1977 to include  
13 participants in non-TANAF State public  
14 assistance programs in the  
15 transitional benefit option as set  
16 forth in Section 11 of the Food Stamp  
17 Act. For states like New York, with  
18 general assistance programs, this  
19 would provide critical support to  
20 those moving from welfare to work.

21 Thank you very much for the  
22 opportunity to present testimony.

23 MR. CANAVAN: Kathy Youngers?

24 MS. YOUNGERS: Hi. I'm Kathy  
25 Youngers. I'm from Farm Wives United,

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2 which is an organization that is  
3 across the United States. Not many of  
4 you here are dairy farmers, but I am a  
5 dairy farmer and we are a  
6 third-generation dairy farm.

7 Right now food in America is  
8 becoming scarce, that is grown in  
9 America, because the farms are going  
10 under. And I just wanted to talk to  
11 you today. One quote I want to give  
12 you is from Liberty And Justice For  
13 All. One of the goals of  
14 globalization is to render America  
15 helpless and dependent on foreign  
16 sources of production. And this is  
17 very true.

18 The American public today  
19 believes that when he or she goes to  
20 the grocery store, that all the food  
21 products in that store are safe,  
22 regulated, USDA inspected, and this is  
23 not true. Over 50 percent of the food  
24 is imported, or at least that was 50  
25 percent in 2003. I don't know the

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2 figure today. The problem is not the  
3 imported food but that this food does  
4 not meet the strict regulations that  
5 American farmers need to meet.

6 Foreign producers use pesticides  
7 and practices long outlawed in the  
8 United States. The USDA reports high  
9 incidents of failure to comply to U.S.  
10 standards. Yet, these foods are in  
11 our grocery stores today.

12 We talked about the food stamp  
13 program, we talked about the fresh  
14 fruits and vegetables to local people.  
15 We need to keep the local farmers  
16 going and not just the two-acres  
17 farmers, but 300 acres.

18 We have a co-op in Western New  
19 York who is unable to get fresh milk  
20 product into New York City. Yet fresh  
21 milk product and other milk products  
22 come from China, from New Zealand, and  
23 this is something that I don't  
24 understand, and I think needs  
25 investigation.

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2           There's one thing I want to  
3           specifically talk about today, and  
4           that is people in this country have a  
5           right to know what they are eating.  
6           One issue that needs immediate  
7           attention is MPC, milk protein  
8           concentrate. It is a by-product of  
9           milk, it is a waste product of milk.  
10          It slips through the cracks and comes  
11          into our country labeled for animal  
12          use only, yet is it in human foods  
13          from baby formula to all kinds of  
14          sauces that we to process, cheese  
15          product, which is MPCs. It fools the  
16          consumer into thinking that this is  
17          milk because milk is in the title,  
18          milk protein concentrate. But it is  
19          not milk at all. It is a substitute  
20          for milk. It is a waste product.

21          There have never been any  
22          studies to see if MPCs have any  
23          nutritional value. Yet they are  
24          substitutes for nonfat dry milk.  
25          There has never been FDA approval for

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2 MPCs. FDA has no definition for MPC.  
3 FDA requires all legal ingredients in  
4 human food to pass strict safety tests  
5 defined as GRAS, generally recognized  
6 as safe criteria. The FDA has stated  
7 themselves that the government has not  
8 conducted any GRAS studies on MPCs.  
9 They don't even know if they have any  
10 nutritional value. Yet they are  
11 displacing milk in our country.  
12 Mothers think they are buying milk for  
13 their children, fresh cheese. But the  
14 cheese in those little packages that  
15 are wrapped up are basically nothing.  
16 They are basically MPCs, which is, I  
17 call it plastic food. Food and  
18 nutrition. Who's regulating it? The  
19 school lunch program, WIC programs,  
20 and senior citizen programs, how many  
21 illegal products are included in the  
22 supply to our children, to pregnant  
23 women and to senior citizens?

24 I think that something needs to  
25 be done with the food stamp, with

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2 these programs that only American  
3 produced products should be in these  
4 programs to be handed out in the  
5 schools, in the WIC program.

6 I just ask everybody in this  
7 room to please be involved, to please  
8 find out why we are eating imported  
9 unsafe food, and I guess on every  
10 grocery shelf, and if you wish to get  
11 involved, just contact the Farm Wives  
12 United.

13 Thank you very much.

14 MR. CANAVAN: Gus Youngers?

15 MR. YOUNGERS: I'm Gus Youngers.

16 I'm a dairy farmer from Western New  
17 York. And I think that it is time the  
18 USDA helps us level the playing field.  
19 There's very few things in this  
20 country that are matched with what can  
21 come in from other countries. They  
22 use chemicals, pesticides. For  
23 instance, in New Zealand they have  
24 major pasture system, which is fine.  
25 They bring their cows, they take a

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2 milking power to the pasture, pump the  
3 milk into a tank, take it back to the  
4 farm. Yet, it hasn't been cooled yet.  
5 They wait for the milk to cool down,  
6 to the truck, and I was talking to a  
7 person that had been in New Zealand  
8 and saw that a year a half ago. So  
9 they're still doing it. We have to  
10 have our milk refrigerated under 45  
11 degrees in less than an hour -- less  
12 than two hours after it's done  
13 milking, and we can't -- with our meat  
14 standards that are not met by  
15 countries other than the U.S., and  
16 nobody -- I don't care whether you go  
17 to apple growers, you go to the grain  
18 crop farmers, any kind of farming you  
19 want to go to, the food in the other  
20 countries that is made from there and  
21 shipped out, do not have to -- they're  
22 using chemicals and pesticides that we  
23 have been outlawed more than 20-some  
24 years ago. And I think it's time --  
25 there's an old adage that my



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2 grandfather said years ago: Feed 'em,  
3 fool 'em and forget 'em. And don't  
4 feed 'em if you can get out of it.

5 This country, they're feeding  
6 them now, they're fooling with letting  
7 them put in imported ingredients that  
8 are dumbing down what the natural  
9 products are, there's disease in some  
10 of these products, there's unsanitary  
11 -- for instance, MCPs are being made  
12 in India from what -- water buffalo  
13 now. Everyone knows what a water  
14 buffalo is and where they like to  
15 wallow. Think about it. And they're  
16 making milk now.

17 And the onion scare, I don't  
18 know how many of you heard about that  
19 in Pittsburgh, there was six people  
20 died in Pittsburgh from raw onions  
21 that -- I believe it was one of the  
22 fast-food stores or places, these  
23 onions came in from Mexico. And when  
24 they got traced right down to it, they  
25 found out by following it, there was

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2 raw sewage in the fields that they  
3 were fertilized with, yet this blew  
4 over and nobody -- next to nobody  
5 heard about this.

6 So I ask you people, the USDA,  
7 to support American farmers and make a  
8 living wage for the American farmers.

9 And why is this country letting  
10 corporate America walk all our jobs  
11 out of this country, for corporate  
12 good, not for the good of the American  
13 people? If the people -- the jobs  
14 stay here, the people would be working  
15 and they would be earning jobs --  
16 earning money and wages and they  
17 wouldn't need the food stamps program  
18 as much or any of this other stuff, if  
19 they were using that.

20 Thank you very much.

21 MR. CANAVAN: Before I call  
22 Shana McLure-Barry, we will take a  
23 five-minute break after Ms. Barry's  
24 presentation, a five-minute break, at  
25 which time could I ask, please, for

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2 Warren Shonbach to be ready to  
3 present, Deborah Jones, Tim Harner and  
4 Jennifer Wilkins.

5 Your presentation, ma'am, a  
6 five-minute break, and then those four  
7 next speakers.

8 Thank you.

9 Ma'am?

10 MS. BARRY: Thank you very much.

11 Good afternoon -- or good  
12 morning to everyone. My name is Shana  
13 McLure-Barry, and I'm a crop farmer  
14 from Cayuga County, which is in the  
15 Finger Lakes area of New York State.  
16 My husband's family has been farming  
17 our farm for over a hundred years. We  
18 were here before Cornell University,  
19 we're 15 minutes from Cornell  
20 University. Our farm never took a  
21 grant or subsidy until 1996 or '7 and  
22 yet the most we've ever taken is close  
23 to 3- or \$5,000 a year. We put a half  
24 a million dollars of money into our  
25 local area. We have brought hay down

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2 to restaurants here, we've raised  
3 natural beef, we grown kidney beans,  
4 for years we grew for the vegetable  
5 industry which is now defunct in our  
6 area, which was in Geneva, New York.  
7 So we're very concerned about food.  
8 And we're also very concerned, the  
9 fact that it's getting more difficult  
10 for us to take care of our older  
11 generation, the generation that made  
12 this country. Our World War II  
13 veterans. And even our immigrants who  
14 have come here afterwards, who have  
15 come for a better place. At some  
16 point in time we were all immigrants.  
17 And the fact that we're not being able  
18 to allow our children to have a way to  
19 make the American life if we don't  
20 give them good nutrition and if we're  
21 not enabling them to have good jobs.

22 I would like to specifically  
23 speak about the situation of the mass  
24 loss of farms, which I feel directly  
25 affects our food stamp program and our

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2 nutrition programs. In the State of  
3 New York right now there's less than  
4 7,000 dairies that put milk into any  
5 system. Supposedly the dairies are 90  
6 percent of our farms that we have in  
7 all of New York State. I can't even  
8 imagine the few amount of crop farmers  
9 who are left. 95 percent of our wheat  
10 that is processed in Buffalo, New York  
11 comes out of Canada. Am I glad the  
12 Canadian farmer has a market for their  
13 grain? Yes. Would I like a market  
14 for my grain? Yes.

15 We do not have an  
16 over-production of food in this  
17 country. So what I'm asking you all  
18 to do is to go back to the USDA and  
19 ask them to question what the banking  
20 policies are that we have. The reason  
21 that we don't have young people going  
22 into farming, because they're looking  
23 at us, who are in our 50s and 60s, and  
24 saying why should we do this when we  
25 are being cut off at the knees for any

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2 kind of businesses that produces the  
3 food? We have no access to lending  
4 capital as of the last ten years. We  
5 are asking for a GAO investigation of  
6 the farms through this agency which is  
7 part of one of the major agencies  
8 along with farm credit, which is a  
9 quasi-government agency that is  
10 supposedly loaning monies to the  
11 farmers. If all the grants and  
12 subsidies were put into a pot and the  
13 farmer was able to borrow it at a  
14 decent amount of interest, three and a  
15 half to four percent, as opposed to a  
16 select few megafarms getting a very,  
17 very good -- and I'm a large farm, by  
18 the way, so it's no small versus large  
19 -- being able to get access to lending  
20 capital, we would insure that there is  
21 food for the next generations to come.

22 Right now if you look at any of  
23 the USDA memos, some of our line grant  
24 universities are not even offering any  
25 kind of lending type of education

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2 because there are no banks that do  
3 lending. So there again, in the  
4 Lancaster Farmer our secretary of  
5 agriculture said that he was the  
6 investment banker as the government  
7 for the United States farmer. So to  
8 insure that decent food programs are  
9 available through the USA, there again  
10 as farmers we ask for a GAO  
11 investigation of how the monies is  
12 being lent to farmers.

13 Thank you very much.

14 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you, ma'am.

15 We'll take a five-minute break,  
16 and in five minutes, at 10:32, we'll  
17 begin with Mr. Warren Shonbach.

18 (Short break.)

19 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you. Thank  
20 you all.

21 As we resume the forum, let me  
22 make a quick observation. As I  
23 mentioned before, we have more  
24 speakers than we ever could have  
25 anticipated, which is wonderful.

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2 Everybody deserves the ear of the  
3 Under-Secretary. If we could just ask  
4 people to synthesize, crystallize,  
5 concentrate their comments, provide as  
6 expansive written comments as you  
7 would like, that will give everybody a  
8 fair opportunity. The  
9 Under-Secretary's schedule is  
10 inflexible, unfortunately, at the end  
11 of the forum. So if we could just  
12 begin with Mr. Shonbach, please.

13 MR. SHONBACH: Thank you.

14 Good morning, Mr.

15 Under-Secretary. My name is Warren  
16 Shonbach and I am the vice president  
17 of Friendship Dairies, Incorporated,  
18 one of the few remaining family-owned  
19 and operated dairy companies in New  
20 York State. Our brand is the leading  
21 cottage cheese and sour cream in the  
22 New York metropolitan area and many  
23 other East Coast markets. We directly  
24 employ in excess of 250 people in our  
25 manufacturing plant in rural western



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2 New York, and an additional 50 people  
3 combined in our Long Island  
4 headquarters and various other sales  
5 offices located up and down the  
6 eastern seaboard.

7 In addition we purchase raw milk  
8 under contract from approximately 100  
9 independent dairy farmers in New York  
10 and Pennsylvania and maintain an  
11 additional supply agreement to  
12 purchase the milk from another 100 or  
13 so farms through the northeast  
14 preeminent dairy farmer cooperative,  
15 dairy marketing services.

16 Since our business is strictly  
17 domestic, I'm going to limit my  
18 comments to the improvements we would  
19 like to see addressed in domestic  
20 dairy regulations and dairy programs  
21 as a result of the 2007 Farm Bill.

22 Although the changes in the  
23 international dairy marketplace  
24 indirectly impact us, I'm going to  
25 stay close to home in my comments for

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2 expediency.

3 Plainly stated, we need to  
4 simplify federal regulations  
5 pertaining to milk and dairy and  
6 change the remaining regulations to  
7 make them more market-oriented. Dairy  
8 is one of, if not the most highly  
9 regulated agricultural businesses in  
10 America. Worse yet, federal dairy  
11 regulations are so complicated,  
12 contradictory and outdated that they  
13 actually impede the industry's  
14 ability to grow and innovate.

15 For instance, it take nearly two  
16 years to make even minor changes to  
17 federal milk marketing rules to  
18 respond to market conditions that may  
19 change literally overnight.

20 A streamlined amendment process  
21 should be adopted for federal milk  
22 order similar to what is currently  
23 used in many of the fruit and  
24 vegetable market orders, so that they  
25 can adapt to rapid changes in the

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2 marketplace, both structural and  
3 environmental.

4 Two federal programs intended to  
5 provide price safety nets to dairy  
6 farmers who work in opposition to each  
7 other rather than performing their  
8 stated function. Alone, the dairy  
9 price support program which was  
10 supposed to sunset several years ago  
11 served a valuable purpose. When  
12 combined with the milk income loss  
13 contract program, milk, said to expire  
14 tomorrow, they both become  
15 dysfunctional.

16 The support price program  
17 establishes a pricing floor by  
18 agreeing to purchase commodity  
19 products at a minimum price when the  
20 commercial marketplace would otherwise  
21 have no interest in buying them.

22 When the price reaches that  
23 so-called safety net level, the milk  
24 program kicks in to pay dairy farmers  
25 a bonus which allows them to continue

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2 to produced milk with little regard  
3 for the price they would otherwise  
4 receive for it in the commercial  
5 marketplace. The net effect is that  
6 taxpayers are paying to keep dairy  
7 farmers in business producing product  
8 that is not needed and then paying a  
9 second time to remove the same product  
10 from the marketplace.

11 One of these programs has got to  
12 go. I believe it should be the dairy  
13 price support program because the milk  
14 program is more effective dollar for  
15 dollar in supporting dairy farmers and  
16 will allow the marketplace to clear  
17 itself of excess production while  
18 being more suitable for the current  
19 international trading climate.

20 In this era of graphic and  
21 cost-effective transportation, we must  
22 recognize that milk markets are for  
23 the most part national in scope. The  
24 2007 Farm Bill should dictate that  
25 areas of the country operating

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2 state-wide pools or compacts that do  
3 not adhere to the principles of  
4 federal policy goals should be  
5 excluded from receiving money from  
6 federal programs. We should not be  
7 pitting one part of the nation's dairy  
8 farmers against another.

9 We need to honestly evaluate  
10 whether the intent of our dairy  
11 programs are social or economic. If  
12 the intent is to save the family farm  
13 in certain regions of the country,  
14 then pricing programs that equally  
15 benefit the typically larger corporate  
16 farm should not be utilized. However,  
17 I firmly believe the intent of federal  
18 farm policy should be to provide an  
19 economic safety net for all milk  
20 producers and apply evenhandedly  
21 regardless of the size, location or  
22 ownership structure of the farm. It  
23 is wrong to assume that family farmers  
24 are not as efficient as large  
25 corporate operations or that all

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2 family farms are small. If we can  
3 remove artificial price enhancements  
4 the most effective operations are  
5 going to be the ones that survive and  
6 prosper.

7 Existing federal farm policies  
8 for milk have combined to increase  
9 price volatility while prolonging  
10 periods of excessively low prices  
11 creating unnecessary economic hardship  
12 for producers and taxpayers alike.  
13 The brief experiment with forward  
14 pricing contracts that was by all  
15 measures a success should be  
16 resuscitated. Grain, wheat and  
17 soybean farmers can all forward  
18 contract with their customers to  
19 guarantee a fair price for a set  
20 period of time and dairy farmers  
21 should have the same options available  
22 to them, should they wish to take  
23 advantage of it.

24 Furthermore, the program should  
25 be open to all industry participants,

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2 regardless of whether the milk is to  
3 be used for food consumption or  
4 manufacturing.

5 MR. CANAVAN: You've run out of  
6 time.

7 MR. SHONBACH: Can I just read  
8 one last sentence here?

9 MR. CANAVAN: Go for it.

10 MR. SHONBACH: Thank you.

11 Lastly, the 2007 Farm Bill is an  
12 opportune time to address the pricing  
13 mechanism used for milk under the  
14 federal market order system. The use  
15 of the mass survey for cheddar cheese,  
16 butter, nonfat dry milk and whey is  
17 flawed in that it is too narrow a  
18 group of products upon which to base  
19 price of milk. Furthermore, the  
20 survey is subject to misreporting and  
21 indirectly but fatally linked to the  
22 thin trading at the CME.

23 Additional shortcomings to the  
24 current pricing is that it avoids  
25 manufacturing allowances and formulas

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2 that change over time. A more  
3 appropriate pricing mechanism would be  
4 the use of the existing trading  
5 futures --

6 MR. CANAVAN: Your time -- you're  
7 going to have to sit down. You're  
8 cutting into other people's time.

9 MR. SHONBACH: Okay. Thank you.

10 MR. CANAVAN: Ms. Deborah Jones,  
11 please.

12 MS. JONES: Good morning again,  
13 Under-Secretary Bost, and thank you,  
14 and I thank you, Mr. Jackson, for  
15 giving this opportunity to New Jersey  
16 to comment on the seniors farmers'  
17 market nutrition program.

18 My name is Deborah Jones. I'm  
19 the director of New Jersey WIC  
20 services and -- including the WIC  
21 farmers' market nutrition program, and  
22 I also have the responsibility for the  
23 administration of the senior farmers'  
24 market program, in partnership with  
25 our sister agency, the New Jersey



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2 Department of Agriculture, County  
3 Office on Aging, New Jersey farmers  
4 and youth farm stands.

5 New Jersey's history with this  
6 SNP program began in 1997. As we saw  
7 a vehicle to address health  
8 disparities of older Americans by  
9 providing locally grown produce to 500  
10 low-income seniors in urban and rural  
11 communities within our state.

12 In 2001 funding became available  
13 from the Commodity Credit Corporation  
14 of the United States Department of  
15 Agriculture to develop or expand the  
16 seniors farmers' market nutrition  
17 program. Since 2001 federal funds  
18 have supported an average of 35,000  
19 seniors. This represents less than one  
20 percent of the estimated 500,000 that  
21 are eligible to receive program  
22 benefits. And that the check  
23 redemption rates in New Jersey average  
24 from 85 to 91 percent per year. This  
25 program has been very successful in

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2 meeting the needs of older Americans  
3 because of the collaboration and  
4 commitment of our partners in  
5 providing services to seniors,  
6 authorizing farmers and other  
7 administrators functions with our  
8 financial support.

9 I applaud USDA in its efforts to  
10 provide administrative funds to  
11 support the cost of doing business as  
12 outlined in the seniors farmers'  
13 market nutrition program proposed  
14 rule. New Jersey WIC services is in  
15 agreement with the proposed rule  
16 regarding a farmers' market agreement.  
17 The proposed rule states that agencies  
18 that operate both the seniors and the  
19 WIC farmers' market nutrition program  
20 may execute a single agreement for  
21 both programs, thus are reducing the  
22 burdensome task of a lot of arduous  
23 paperwork included. And we applaud  
24 you for that.

25 New Jersey recommends that the

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2 State plan, however, submission of  
3 both programs be consistent with the  
4 current WIC farmers' market nutrition  
5 program State plan, which is submitted  
6 every three years.

7 New Jersey WIC services further  
8 agrees with the proposal of providing  
9 categorical eligibility for disabled  
10 individuals. The rule states that the  
11 State agencies may at their discretion  
12 also deem disabled individuals less  
13 than 60 years of age who are residing  
14 in housing facilities occupied by  
15 older individuals and also where  
16 congregate nutrition services are  
17 provided, are categorically eligible  
18 to receive program benefits.

19 The New Jersey WIC services  
20 offer the following recommendations to  
21 you, Under-Secretary, as you move  
22 forward with the policy decisions for  
23 2007. We recommend that the  
24 administrative cost to operate the  
25 program be a separate allocation of

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2 funds. Full funds must remain at or  
3 above the current funding level.  
4 Recommend that the administrative cost  
5 in the 8 percent to be increased to 20  
6 percent to provide benefits and  
7 services to recipients and for the  
8 general administration operation of  
9 the program as cited in the rule. The  
10 use of technology is the most  
11 efficient and effective manner to  
12 improve customer service and  
13 accountability. However, technology  
14 as you know, Under-Secretary, can be  
15 expensive as stand-alone systems. The  
16 use of card technology for multiple  
17 programs, the cost allocation plans,  
18 can reduce cost and also improve  
19 program efficiency simultaneously. We  
20 recommend that USDA conduct regional  
21 strategic planning sessions with  
22 States and perform the cost analysis  
23 to be incurred by State agencies as a  
24 result of the implementation of the  
25 rule. And the last recommendation but

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2 definitely not least, the increased  
3 role of faith in the community  
4 organizations in outreach and  
5 coordination of services that they are  
6 the pulse on the community that can  
7 provide and bring these services into  
8 urban and rural communities.

9 Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for  
10 the opportunity to share our  
11 recommendations with you this morning.  
12 It is our hope that the  
13 recommendations will assist you as you  
14 begin the planning and policy process  
15 that will allow State agencies the  
16 flexibility to serve its seniors.

17 As I close, I would like to  
18 share with you an excerpt of a quote  
19 from a sponsor of the seniors farmers'  
20 market nutrition program.

21 "For many of our seniors this is  
22 the only opportunity they have to  
23 purchase fresh produce. They enjoy  
24 the bus trips that they make to the  
25 farmers' markets and consider it an

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2 enjoyable outing as well as an  
3 enhancement to their diets. I have  
4 worked with the seniors for more than  
5 25 years. This is one of the best  
6 programs that the State of New Jersey  
7 has offered them."

8 Thank you.

9 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you, Ms.  
10 Jones.

11 Timothy Harner, please.

12 MR. HARNER: Good morning. My  
13 name is Tim Harner. I am general  
14 counsel of upstate farms cooperative.  
15 We market about a billion pounds of  
16 milk a year from our 300 dairy farm  
17 families in western New York. Most of  
18 it through plants that our cooperative  
19 owns and operates. We supply a number  
20 of schools with milk. Good nutrition  
21 for children and teenagers starts with  
22 good eating habits and the  
23 overwhelming majority of food  
24 nutrition professionals agree that  
25 milk and other dairy products play an

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2 important role in providing good  
3 nutrition to people of all ages. So  
4 encouraging children and teenagers to  
5 drink milk at school is not only good  
6 because it helps them eat well that  
7 day, it is also good because it helps  
8 children and teenagers learn good  
9 eating habits that will help them eat  
10 well for the rest of their lives.

11 And, of course, it is essential  
12 that when children and teenagers go  
13 home, they find plenty of milk and  
14 other nutritious dairy products such  
15 as cottage cheese and yogurt.  
16 Therefore, upstate farms supports  
17 ample funding for programs such as  
18 food stamps so that Americans of all  
19 ages can benefit nutritionally from  
20 the many delicious dairy products that  
21 come from the milk and the dairy farm  
22 families of upstate farms have been  
23 producing for generations.

24 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you,  
25 Mr. Harner.

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2 Before I call Ms. Jennifer  
3 Wilkins, let me call Rebecca Wittam,  
4 Kelsey Stack, Kathy Roberts and Lee  
5 Davenport.

6 Ms. Wilkins?

7 MS. WILKINS: Good morning.

8 Thank you, Under-Secretary Bost, for  
9 this opportunity to provide input on  
10 programs that will be authorized in  
11 the 2007 Farm Bill. My name is  
12 Jennifer Wilkins. I'm a senior  
13 extension associate in the Division of  
14 Nutritional Sciences at Cornell  
15 University, and I'm also the director  
16 of the Cornell farm to school program.  
17 This program works in tight  
18 partnership with other State agencies  
19 to promote good nutrition in our  
20 schools by accessing fresh local  
21 fruits and vegetables from New York  
22 farmers and other foods from New York  
23 farms as well as simultaneously  
24 strengthening opportunity to value  
25 added industries that our farmers can



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2 be involved with.

3 My comments will be addressing  
4 the food stamp nutrition, the food  
5 stamp program first. The first  
6 recommendation is to apply the good  
7 standards set by the USDA and DHS as  
8 dietary guidelines and the USDA's my  
9 pyramid to the criteria establishing  
10 allowable food stamp program  
11 purchases. Most retail food stores  
12 offer an abundance of food choices to  
13 American consumers who endeavor to  
14 feed their families in healthful ways.  
15 Despite the availability of healthful  
16 choices in today's supermarkets, a  
17 disproportionate amount of food items  
18 can be categorized as nutrient-poor  
19 choices with added fats, sugars and  
20 salt. Indeed, just four items, four  
21 food product categories alone: Bakery  
22 foods, beverages, candies, gums and  
23 snacks and condiments, account for  
24 over 60 percent of the new food  
25 product introductions to the

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2 marketplace every year. Applying  
3 nutrition standards set forth in the  
4 2005 dietary guidance system would  
5 help assure sound choices on the part  
6 of food stamp recipients.

7 Secondly, we recommend providing  
8 incentives for increasing fruit and  
9 vegetable intake among food stamp  
10 program recipients. Food stamp  
11 program recipients are more likely  
12 than higher income groups to  
13 under-consume fruits and vegetables  
14 and have higher rates of chronic  
15 diseases that are negatively  
16 associated with diets that are high in  
17 fruits and vegetables. Since fruits  
18 and vegetables are often more  
19 expensive than other food options and  
20 provide few total calories per dollars  
21 spent, the economic incentive built  
22 into the food stamp program would make  
23 such purchases more attractive to  
24 recipients and would work  
25 synergistically with the food stamp

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2 nutrition education program.

3 Finally, with regard to the food  
4 stamp program we recommend enabling  
5 states to equip all farmers markets  
6 with EBT technology to assure access  
7 of this source of locally grown fresh  
8 fruits and vegetables and plants by  
9 food stamp program recipients.

10 First I would like to thank the  
11 USDA and food nutrition service for  
12 funds used over the past five years to  
13 purchase EBT terminals for farmers'  
14 markets in New York City and in  
15 upstate farmers' markets since 2003.  
16 The equipment was purchased through a  
17 USDA Federal State market improvement  
18 program grant to the New York State  
19 Department of Ag & Markets and this is  
20 much appreciated.

21 The number of farmers' markets  
22 is increasing across the country with  
23 now over 37,000 farmers' markets in  
24 the United States and these are not  
25 only an excellent source of fresh

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2 fruits and vegetables and plants for  
3 home gardens, but these markets are  
4 also sources of food and nutrition  
5 education from farmers and through the  
6 farmers' market nutrition program on  
7 the selection, storage and preparation  
8 of fruits and vegetables.

9 The actions of farmer's markets  
10 is a source of healthful foods that  
11 food stamp recipients are more likely  
12 to under-consume has become  
13 constrained with the implementation of  
14 the electronic benefits transfer  
15 system. To improve the good health  
16 benefits of the food stamp program,  
17 state farmers' markets programs and by  
18 installing EBT equipment.

19 I have many more comments and  
20 they will be in my written transcript.  
21 Thank you for this opportunity.

22 A VOICE: Hold on. I have a  
23 comment I want to make. I want to say  
24 something to you and I want you to  
25 think about and give me your thoughts

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2 on this issue.

3 One of the things that came up  
4 during the reauthorization of food  
5 stamps in 2002 was the question of  
6 limiting the types of foods that could  
7 be purchased with food stamps, that is  
8 healthy foods, and I think you make  
9 reference to that in your comments.  
10 And I'm kind of surprised that you're  
11 the first person who has specifically  
12 said that.

13 The problem that Congress faces  
14 when we talked about this was, what  
15 are you going to limit? And I'll just  
16 give you some examples. I'm not  
17 necessarily looking for you to respond  
18 but to think about.

19 Well, maybe you shouldn't buy  
20 candy with food stamps. Well, the  
21 folks in Georgia had problems with  
22 that because a lot of candy has  
23 peanuts in it. Well, don't buy candy.  
24 Well, the folks in Pennsylvania said,  
25 Well, chocolate. Well, you can't buy

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2 candy -- you can't buy cookies, well,  
3 but what about those folks that make  
4 Twix bars? So, a question of being  
5 able to limit it, you open up a whole  
6 range of questions about how you would  
7 actually go about doing that and  
8 identifying it and then being able to  
9 have those stores manage itself.

10 What are your thoughts?

11 MS. WILKINS: I'm well aware of  
12 the ethical debates that have gone on  
13 around this type of issue. I'm just  
14 recognizing that in the food  
15 environment in which this audience as  
16 well as all income levels are facing,  
17 it is increasingly difficult to make  
18 sound choices and by tailoring or  
19 providing incentives in addition to  
20 what is already supplied in the food  
21 stamp program for purchase of fruits  
22 and vegetables --

23 A VOICE: Hold on. Let me  
24 interrupt. Okay?

25 MS. WILKINS: -- thank you.

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2 MR. CANAVAN: Rebecca Widdam?

3 MS. WIDDAM: I am Rebecca

4 Widdam, director of research for the  
5 homelessness outreach and prevention  
6 project, and I want to thank you all  
7 for being here today and I also want  
8 to thank everyone who spoke and  
9 everyone who will speak and in  
10 particular I want to appreciate and  
11 echo the comments of Edie Mesick and  
12 Jodi Harawitz and Joel Berg and I'm  
13 going to save everyone's time by not  
14 repeating what they said.

15 I'm going to focus, however, on  
16 participation in food stamps because  
17 that's what I know most about, and the  
18 goal of getting money to buy food to  
19 people who don't have money to buy  
20 food is as -- is up there, the number  
21 one accomplishment of the food stamp  
22 program and so the question is: How  
23 do we build on that?

24 Outreach is crucial and has --  
25 and I greatly appreciate the USDA's

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2 work in this area in the last few  
3 years and our work in New York City  
4 and -- but it's not enough.

5 We've completed a study of  
6 clients helped in outreach program in  
7 New York City and we found that only  
8 42 percent enrolled, although they  
9 knew that they were eligible for food  
10 stamps, knew how much they could  
11 receive, which on average was a 20  
12 percent raise in household income, and  
13 knew how to apply. Most didn't  
14 enroll. And many clients who either  
15 didn't enroll or who started to apply  
16 and didn't make it through the process  
17 described administrative hurdles as  
18 the key barrier. And for example, we  
19 know that hassles in the application  
20 process disproportionately affect what  
21 the people -- our study found out,  
22 USDA studies have found out. One  
23 client in our study said it's not that  
24 I decided not to apply, it's that I  
25 didn't have the time. My work didn't



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2 allow it. Another said the reason I  
3 haven't done it, gone to apply, is  
4 that it's really hard to take a day  
5 off from work to go there because I  
6 lose a day of pay.

7 You probably have these, this is  
8 not rocket science.

9 Another client was getting --  
10 was receiving WIC and -- but she was  
11 still skipping meals and, because  
12 although her husband was working, she  
13 was having a high-risk pregnancy and  
14 so she was basically was bedridden.  
15 But because she was bedridden, and  
16 wasn't officially labeled as disabled  
17 by any government program, she  
18 couldn't apply for food stamps and,  
19 you know, we don't want pregnant women  
20 skipping meals, and I don't -- I'm  
21 sure no one here does.

22 So that's the bads news. The  
23 good news is, even the application  
24 process works. The program that we're  
25 a part of had scheduled application

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2 appointments for some clients and 58  
3 percent of the clients with scheduled  
4 application appointments involved  
5 compared with 49 percent of those who  
6 had other enhanced services and only  
7 34 percent of the rest.

8 Not easy to implement, but it  
9 helped.

10 HRA waives -- office waives  
11 required offices visits for some  
12 elderly or disabled clients and those  
13 we spoke with who found out about  
14 those services found them very helpful  
15 and enrolled.

16 The New York State nutrition  
17 improvement project, which Scott  
18 earlier made reference to,  
19 automatically enrolled SSI recipients  
20 who live alone without required  
21 interviews and that has helped over  
22 50,000 in New York City.

23 So building on these innovations  
24 is logical -- and -- so waiving  
25 required office visits and improving

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2 linkages with Social Security,  
3 Medicaid -- yeah -- make it easier for  
4 people.

5 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you.

6 Kelsey Stack?

7 MS. STACK: Good morning. My  
8 name is Kelsey Stack and I've been  
9 assigned to come here to represent the  
10 Staten Island Interfaith Coalition of  
11 Feeding Ministries, which includes  
12 nearly three dozen registered food  
13 programs on Staten Island, from  
14 full-service island-wide programs that  
15 provide emergency food daily and offer  
16 extensive support services to  
17 neighborhoods, to church group causes  
18 that (inaudible) is needed.

19 In the short time that I am  
20 given, I hope that I can accurately  
21 explain the hunger needs of Staten  
22 Island.

23 The need for emergency food  
24 resources on Staten Island has  
25 dramatically increased over the last

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2 three or four years. In some cases  
3 the number of people coming to local  
4 soup kitchens and food pantries have  
5 more than doubled. Typically this is  
6 related to poor economic conditions  
7 compounded by ever-rising housing  
8 costs. Many new participants never  
9 thought they would need emergency food  
10 assistance. And yet there are many  
11 Staten Islanders not yet accessing  
12 emergency food resources.

13 According to the food bank for  
14 New York City, surveys on Staten  
15 Island indicate that over half of  
16 those at risk for hunger on Staten  
17 Island are not receiving any emergency  
18 food assistance. They are not  
19 benefitting from food stamps or WIC  
20 and they are not using pantries or  
21 soup kitchens.

22 In 2003 four percent of Staten  
23 Islanders said that there was at least  
24 one day of the year in which they did  
25 not have enough food. In 2004 this

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2 number jumped to astounding 13  
3 percent.

4 One of the issues that I have  
5 been asked to address today is that of  
6 the food stamp program.

7 In recent months there have been  
8 several excellent developments in this  
9 program. In an August 2005 press  
10 release, released by the New York City  
11 coalition against hunger in food  
12 change, the announcement was made that  
13 new technology is being developed so  
14 that faith and community based food  
15 pantries and soup kitchens will be  
16 able to help clients apply for food  
17 stamps on line, making the process  
18 more convenient and reducing the high  
19 demand for the business of City  
20 offices. This is an absolutely  
21 essential step forward on Stand Island  
22 which is geographically the largest  
23 borough of the City and difficult for  
24 many people to find easy  
25 transportation.

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2           There's only one place on Staten  
3       Island for people to apply for food  
4       stamps, the HRA Model Job Center in  
5       St. George, which is remote from many  
6       areas of Staten Island. Being able to  
7       apply for food stamps in one's own  
8       neighborhood with help insure that  
9       more of those households eligible for  
10      food stamps will actually be able to  
11      apply.

12           Increased food stamp  
13      participation will also help with  
14      local neighborhood economy. With  
15      emergency food needs increasing, not  
16      decreasing, on Staten Island, the  
17      funding for food stamps seems to be  
18      increased and not decreased. Just  
19      maintaining funding at the current  
20      level is not sufficient given the  
21      circumstances we face today.

22           Another program that I will  
23      address today is the emergency food  
24      assistance program, or TEFAP.

25           TEFAP, a program of the USDA

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2 FNS, is helpful in many ways.  
3 However, it often does not save  
4 emergency food providers very much  
5 money. This is because it does not  
6 provide very much in the way of food  
7 to EFPs. Some issues that arise in  
8 TEFAP are that it does not provide  
9 very money fresh proteins, fresh  
10 produce is often bad by the time it  
11 arrives, and the service itself is  
12 somewhat unreliable. There are many  
13 times that emergency food providers  
14 will be expecting something specific  
15 but it does not always show up when  
16 the time comes.

17 Although the members of the  
18 Staten Island Interfaith Coalition of  
19 Feeding Ministries is appreciative of  
20 the service that TEFAP provides, the  
21 service would be more helpful if  
22 emergency food providers were able to  
23 have more of a say over what foods  
24 they are provided with.

25 It would also be helpful if the

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2 food that is promised arrives and  
3 arrives fresh.

4 Members of the Staten Island  
5 Interfaith Coalition of Feeding  
6 Ministries are grateful for the  
7 services that the USDA provides and  
8 with some small improvements these  
9 projects could be even more useful.

10 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you.

11 Kathy Roberts?

12 MS. ROBERTS: Good morning. My  
13 name is Kathy Roberts. I'm a food  
14 stamp specialist with the nutrition  
15 consortium of New York State and I'm  
16 going to supplement the policy  
17 recommendations that Edie Mesick  
18 already made. I have written comments  
19 I'm going to submit and I'll summarize  
20 them quickly.

21 I'm going to focus on a few  
22 specific areas in the food stamp  
23 program. First, work requirements.  
24 We should eliminate all work  
25 requirements in the food stamp



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2 program, it's the only Federal  
3 nutrition assistance program which  
4 attaches a work requirement to  
5 maintaining eligibility. If we can't  
6 eliminate all work requirements, we  
7 must abolish the time limit rules for  
8 able-bodied adults without dependents.  
9 We already have a food stamp  
10 employment training program which  
11 requires employable adults to take  
12 part in work activities and be denied  
13 food stamps or sanctioned if they fail  
14 to comply. There's simply no need to  
15 impose additional work requirements on  
16 adults who can't find a job.

17 Why is ABOD such a problem?

18 Well, we found four particular  
19 problems in New York State.

20 First, ABOD waivers are being  
21 rejected because of the misperception  
22 that that waiver would excuse Apods  
23 from having to participate in work  
24 activities altogether. That's simply  
25 not true. ABODs are erroneously being

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2 told that they can't get food stamps  
3 unless they're receiving welfare or  
4 already working.

5 The tracking requirements are  
6 very burdensome on local districts and  
7 divert resources away from  
8 interviewing households and processing  
9 benefits. And the reporting  
10 obligations are burdensome and  
11 confusing to both recipients and local  
12 district staff. Especially in light  
13 of the fact that most ABODs are  
14 simplified reporters.

15 If we're serious about  
16 simplifying program administration and  
17 reducing unnecessary barriers,  
18 eliminating the ABOD rule is a perfect  
19 start.

20 Second is asset rules. The  
21 current asset limits are so low that  
22 the force households to impoverish  
23 themselves before they can apply for  
24 food stamps and leaves them with no  
25 cushion in the event of an emergency

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2 or sudden loss of income.

3 How low are the asset limits?

4 Well, they're so low that the monthly  
5 gross income limit for many households  
6 is higher than the asset limit.

7 In areas with high housing  
8 costs, such as New York City, one  
9 month of shelter and utilities alone  
10 can exceed the asset limit.

11 Also, the current asset rules  
12 force low-income households with IRAs,  
13 burial accounts over \$1,500 and  
14 college savings plans to deplete these  
15 accounts before they can qualify for  
16 food stamps.

17 Ideally we should eliminate all  
18 asset requirements for the food stamp  
19 program just like other Federal  
20 nutrition assistance programs. If we  
21 can't do that, we must increase the  
22 asset limit to \$10,000, exclude all  
23 retirement accounts, burial funds and  
24 college savings plans.

25 The third area, medical expense

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2 deduction. This is tremendously  
3 beneficial to elderly and disabled  
4 households, but the bare-faced  
5 verification requirement is burdensome  
6 and time-consuming for both households  
7 and workers. We found that the  
8 elderly and disabled often are not  
9 being credited with the proper medical  
10 deduction, without substantial time  
11 and effort on the part of outreach  
12 workers and eligibility staff.  
13 Sorting through a household's medical  
14 bill, figure out what's covered by  
15 insurance and what isn't, and  
16 estimating what expenses are going to  
17 continue over the course of the  
18 certification period is challenging at  
19 best. And when changes occur to  
20 health insurance programs, trying to  
21 estimate a household's future  
22 out-of-pocket medical expenses becomes  
23 a Herculean task.

24 We would recommend that a  
25 standard medical deduction be adopted

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2 with the option of allowing households  
3 to use their actual verified medical  
4 expenses in excess of the standard.

5 Fourth area, immigrant  
6 restoration. We recommend, okay, that  
7 we remove the five-year bar,  
8 especially for domestic violence  
9 victims and elderly. And in my  
10 written comments I have some  
11 suggestions for increasing  
12 participation by military families and  
13 farmers.

14 Thank you.

15 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you.

16 As Lee Davenport approaches the  
17 microphone, could I ask Abigail  
18 Weinberg, John Krokowsky, Fern Estro  
19 and Bill Ayers to approach the  
20 microphone area to be ready to present  
21 your comments.

22 Thank you.

23 Mr. Davenport?

24 MR. DAVENPORT: Lee Davenport.  
25 Assistant director.

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2 Secretary Bost, I would like to  
3 welcome you back to the Big Apple.  
4 Today I'll focus my testimony on two  
5 apples. I bought this apple outside  
6 at the farmers' market, it's  
7 nutritious, it's locally sourced. It  
8 is -- it will support a regional food  
9 system. But this apple is not enough.  
10 To get this nutritious apple to more  
11 hungry New Yorkers we'll have to use  
12 technology imbedded in things like  
13 this apple.

14 The technology behind this IPOD  
15 can teach us to cut 16-page  
16 applications, to cut eight-hour  
17 waiting room times and 30-day  
18 processing. To get people food when  
19 they need it, we need equal  
20 opportunity technology. Let me repeat  
21 that, Mr. Secretary. Hungry people  
22 need equal opportunity technology.

23 Let's jump-start food stamp  
24 technology. You gave New York City a  
25 \$1,000,000 three-year grant to improve

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2 participation with technology. We  
3 know that's not enough. We know it's  
4 too little money.

5 Food change has as challenge for  
6 you. If you can put up \$10,000,000,  
7 we'll take the private sector money  
8 and foundation money, match that  
9 \$10,000,000 and bring people food in  
10 real time. Not in ten years, not in  
11 three years. But September 29, 2006.

12 Take the rest of my time to  
13 imagine a system that will use this  
14 technology to get this apple to the  
15 stomachs of hungry Americans.

16 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you,  
17 Mr. Davenport.

18 Abigail Weinberg?

19 John Krokowsky?

20 MR. KROKOWSKY: Well, I always  
21 thought it was going to be a fear to  
22 follow Joel Berg, but not Lee  
23 Davenport is a challenge at hand.

24 My name is John Krokowsky and  
25 I'm the director of policy and public

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2 information at City Harvest. On  
3 behalf of Sally Hernandez-Pineto, our  
4 executive director, I thank you for  
5 coming here, Mr. Under-Secretary, and  
6 colleagues. And in the interest of  
7 time I'm going to keep my comments  
8 very short.

9 I do want you -- everybody knows  
10 what City Harvest is, I hope. We are a  
11 food rescue program and part of  
12 Americas second harvest network.

13 We help feed more than 260,000  
14 each week. And along with our  
15 colleagues from local and national  
16 hunger response organizations and the  
17 agricultural field, we're asking USDA  
18 to view the Farm Bill 2007 as an  
19 opportunity to maximize the impact and  
20 expand the food stamp program for  
21 low-income and food-insecure  
22 Americans, and its many strengths to  
23 provide people with the ability to  
24 make autonomous food decisions, it  
25 allows them the dignity of utilizing



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2 existing retail food markets and food  
3 and farmers' markets, and it provides  
4 critical benefits to the food system.

5 In New York City, a major recent  
6 accomplishment has been the increasing  
7 number of people who are enrolled in  
8 the program, and, Mr. Under-Secretary,  
9 I think it has in fact been part of  
10 your watchful eye in addition to the  
11 agencies both public and private in  
12 New York City that have done that.

13 What we really need to do is, we need  
14 to create a paragon shift in the way  
15 food stamps are perceived. That they  
16 are, in fact, a public health program.  
17 And that high usage by eligible  
18 households is a positive, and, in  
19 contract, low usage by eligible  
20 households is viewed as a negative.

21 The food stamp program has other  
22 strengths, certainly the work with  
23 disaster food stamps in Louisiana,  
24 Mississippi and Alabama were perfect.  
25 You need to be aware of the fact that

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2 the commodity foods that you released  
3 through your rapid food response  
4 system was certainly well appreciated  
5 and worked very efficiently, and  
6 that's an important part of the food  
7 programs.

8 Based on the American Second  
9 Harvest study of 2001, based on the  
10 United States household and food  
11 security in the United States 2003  
12 report, we respectfully request that  
13 we identify food stamp cuts as  
14 unconscionable.

15 Although the 2003 report stated  
16 that there was only -- there was not a  
17 statistically different level of food  
18 insecurity from 2002, the question at  
19 hand is, how many people who were  
20 food-insecure would ever be acceptable  
21 in the United States?

22 As we move forward we certainly  
23 need to increase our outreach and I'd  
24 like you to know that, give  
25 consideration of moving away from the

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2 thrifty food plan to the moderate cost  
3 food program based on food prices and  
4 also the pluralistic society that we  
5 currently have in this country.

6 And in closing I want to thank  
7 you very much again, because we know  
8 that food stamps do, in fact, make  
9 American stronger.

10 Thank you.

11 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you, Mr.  
12 Krokowsky.

13 Fern Estro?

14 MS. ESTRO: Thank you. Back to  
15 New York City. I am Fern Gail Estro.  
16 I am a registered dietician and  
17 nutrition educator out of New York  
18 City, and I'm speaking on behalf of  
19 the Society for Nutrition Education.  
20 We are also know as SNE.

21 I want to thank you,  
22 Under-Secretary Bost, and USDA's food  
23 and nutrition service for allowing SNE  
24 and all the rest of us the opportunity  
25 to participate in this important

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2 session and to offer comments on the  
3 Farm Bill, nutrition title and  
4 preparation for reauthorization.

5 SNE represents unique  
6 professional interests of nutrition  
7 educators in the United States and  
8 world-wide. SNE is dedicated to  
9 promoting healthy sustainable food  
10 choices and has addition on health  
11 people in healthy communities.

12 We encourages changes in the  
13 2007 Farm Bill that will support these  
14 goals of health and sustainability.

15 SNE, our testimony addresses he  
16 need to improve the food stamp  
17 program. There is a need to improve  
18 access by allowing community-based  
19 application process. It needs to be  
20 reflective of the 2005 dietary  
21 guidelines. And we recommend a fruit  
22 and vegetable incentive as part of the  
23 program. We do not support inclusion  
24 of vitamins and supplements. In  
25 addition, we feel very -- have very

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2 strong support for the senior farmers'  
3 market nutrition program. We want to  
4 see increasing access to fruit and  
5 vegetables. The funding is needed to  
6 accommodate every state, all United  
7 States territories, and thoroughly  
8 recognizing Indian tribal governments.  
9 And I will comment that at \$60 a  
10 child, I think that's a reasonable  
11 request.

12 Flexibility in program design  
13 based on community need is critical.  
14 But funding should not be at a State  
15 discretion for purposes outside of  
16 older adults' access to food from  
17 local farmers. There is a need to  
18 support nutrition education that  
19 encourages recipients to build  
20 healthful eating patterns and to take  
21 action for good health. Appropriate  
22 methods for conveying key messages are  
23 also important. For example,  
24 (inaudible), size, culturally  
25 appropriate. Communication about the

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2 program's existence with older  
3 populations is also a consideration  
4 and needs to be across programs, use  
5 community and be consistent. We need  
6 to establish consistent nutrition and  
7 health standards across programs.  
8 Again, using the 2005 dietary  
9 guidelines.

10 These nutrition title programs  
11 include the emergency food assistance  
12 program, food distribution in Indian  
13 reservations program, community --  
14 commodity supplemental food program,  
15 and the nutrition assistance program  
16 in Puerto Rico.

17 Farm bill programs are a social  
18 marketing opportunity for American  
19 health. The food stamp nutrition  
20 education program is an important  
21 component of changing health behavior  
22 and is important to provide viable  
23 funding. SNE has provided extensive  
24 comments in this in the past and will  
25 continue to do -- to be of assistance

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2 to you in the future in this area.

3 We support expansion of food and  
4 vegetable snack program and to  
5 accommodate every state, all United  
6 States territories and Federally  
7 recognized Indian tribal governments.

8 We encourage further financial support  
9 for wireless technology at farmers'  
10 markets to increase access too local  
11 food for food stamp recipients.

12 By the way, my comment before  
13 about \$60 per children was in  
14 reference to the food and vegetable  
15 snack program.

16 We want to see expansion of the  
17 DOD fresh program. We also encourage  
18 providing language that supports  
19 purchasing locally within every state  
20 again and in United States territories  
21 and Federal recognized Indian tribal  
22 governments.

23 A domestic market to us is  
24 programs where Federal foods are  
25 unmatched State levels to promote

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2 fruit and vegetable promotion efforts  
3 is also important.

4 A New York City case study, and  
5 I realize we have come to the end, so  
6 therefore what I am going to highlight  
7 here is that we are very supportive of  
8 the expansion of the EBT program and  
9 recertification for seniors that will  
10 also address the need to reach people  
11 rapidly.

12 I will be submitting written  
13 testimony as well.

14 And thank you for your time.

15 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you.

16 As we call Billy Ayers to the  
17 microphone, would Mark Waldman, Carlos  
18 Rodriguez, Casandra Dagle and Anna  
19 Lupay approach the microphone, to the  
20 waiting area.

21 Mr. Ayers?

22 MR. AYERS: Good morning. My  
23 name is Bill Ayers. I'm the  
24 co-founder and executive director of  
25 World Hunger Unit. For 30 years we've



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2 been identifying and supporting  
3 innovative solutions to hunger and  
4 poverty and I'd like to talk about  
5 four today.

6 But first I'd like to commend  
7 Secretary Bost because -- and I think  
8 most people in this room are aware of  
9 it, in an age of increasing poverty  
10 and also increasing budget cuts on  
11 other programs, that hasn't happened  
12 with the nutrition programs and we  
13 know that you are a big part of the  
14 reason for that, maintaining and also  
15 growing those programs.

16 Now, that shouldn't count for my  
17 time either, just like Joel Berg said.

18 The first thing I wanted to talk  
19 about was something that's actually  
20 come about from a committee that you  
21 established at FNS, and that's the  
22 National Food Stamp Outreach  
23 Committee.

24 And there are two, I think,  
25 breakthroughs there. The first one

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2 is, we've been working for over a year  
3 and the first thing I wanted to  
4 mention is a database of innovative  
5 solutions, innovative programs for  
6 outreach and the simplification of  
7 food stamps. We've looked a dozens  
8 and dozens of programs, many of which  
9 have been funded by USDA, and the key  
10 thing now would be to put them up and  
11 hopefully -- I'm told by your  
12 colleagues this will happen in the  
13 next month, this will be a national  
14 database that will have links to  
15 national organizations, to state-wide  
16 organizations, to grass roots  
17 organizations, so that everyone around  
18 the country can see the best programs  
19 that are providing food stamps for  
20 outreach and simplification.

21 My suggestions are that somebody  
22 remain in charge of that so -- to keep  
23 it fresh, and that the second thing is  
24 that we have regional workshops at  
25 different times on some of the best of

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2 these innovative programs to make them  
3 spread around the country.

4 The second thing is a program  
5 that we started called Hunger  
6 Champions, it started out as Hunger  
7 Heros, now it's Hunger Champions. And  
8 next week we will be giving out those  
9 awards at the food stamp conference.

10 The idea here is to try to award  
11 the folks who are really on the front  
12 line of making America stronger, and  
13 that is the folks who work in your  
14 offices across the country, who are  
15 doing the best job of providing food  
16 stamps to people in a timely manner,  
17 in a courteous manner. You've heard  
18 over and over again, the difficulties  
19 people have in actually going through  
20 the process, and we think that this  
21 program will encourage workers, food  
22 stamp workers all over the country to  
23 enhance that process.

24 We would hope that the awards  
25 will spread to the other nutrition

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2 programs that you run so that they are  
3 Hunger Champions on all of those  
4 programs. Because, in fact, they are  
5 the champions, the Hunger Champions of  
6 America.

7 The third innovative program I'd  
8 like to talk about is something that  
9 you heard a lot about today, and that  
10 is improving the food quality and  
11 helping small farmers, and as you  
12 know, there are movements afoot all  
13 over the country, and World Hunger is  
14 involved in them, Second Harvest  
15 certainly is, we'd like to be working  
16 with you much more closely to be able  
17 to provide funding for the purchase of  
18 fresh fruits and vegetables locally  
19 from small and medium-sized farm, so  
20 they can go into the emergency food  
21 system.

22 And the last thing has to do  
23 with something that I know is close to  
24 your heart, and that's hunger during  
25 the summer amongst children. You have

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2 been a champion of the summer feeding  
3 program and yet with all of the work  
4 that's been done over all of the  
5 years, it still only reaches about  
6 20-some-odd percent of the kids. And  
7 what we are suggesting is that a  
8 special card be set up as part of the  
9 food stamp program that would be a  
10 summer supplemental of approximately  
11 \$100 for each child, be given to their  
12 families, to make up for the school  
13 meals that they won't have, in places  
14 where the food -- the summer feeding  
15 program is not possible, especially to  
16 pilot this in some rural areas of the  
17 country and other places to see if it  
18 works, to see if it can eliminate  
19 hunger in the worst time, during the  
20 summer, to the most vulnerable people.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. CANAVAN: Mark Waldman?

23 MR. WALDMAN: Hello. My name is  
24 Mark Waldman. I'm here today  
25 representing Betsy Gottbaum, the

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2 public advocate for the City of New  
3 York.

4 First I would like to thank the  
5 USDA and Secretary Bost for coming  
6 here to listen and for bringing  
7 together the best and brightest minds  
8 in the anti-hunger community to  
9 discuss ways to improve federal  
10 nutrition through the up coming  
11 reauthorization of the Farm Bill.

12 It is through this kind of open  
13 process that we can improve the food  
14 stamp program and make it a more  
15 effective tool in the fight against  
16 hunger in New York City and throughout  
17 the nation.

18 I would also like to recognize  
19 the tireless and often thankless work  
20 of the New York City anti-hunger  
21 advocates as well as those who provide  
22 services to individuals and families  
23 in need.

24 One of the many duties of the  
25 public advocate is to serve as an

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2 ombudsman to help solve people's  
3 problems with government. Our office  
4 employs a team of New York City  
5 government experts who help  
6 constituents navigate complex  
7 bureaucracies and assist when problems  
8 arise.

9 Over the last four years our  
10 ombudsman unit has received hundreds  
11 of calls from New Yorkers frustrated  
12 with the food stamp program. While  
13 each call is different in specifics,  
14 may contain similar themes. The  
15 majority of our calls come from  
16 constituents who are having problems  
17 with the slow, inefficient way that  
18 food stamps are administered here. We  
19 have received calls about lengthy  
20 application processing times, loss of  
21 recertification paperwork and changes  
22 in benefit levels without  
23 notification.

24 New York City's problems with  
25 the administration of the food stamp

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2 program by the Human Resources  
3 Administration are not due to  
4 inadequacies of their staff. But  
5 instead with the amount of  
6 responsibility the staff is burdened  
7 with. Simplifying the application  
8 process, waiving finger-imaging  
9 requirements and updating equipment  
10 and technology would enable HRA to  
11 process all food stamp related  
12 paperwork more quickly and  
13 efficiently.

14 It is our recommendation that  
15 the USDA simplify the process of  
16 applying for Federally funded food  
17 benefit programs, food stamp eligible  
18 requirements should be increased to  
19 fall in line with programs such as WIC  
20 and the school reduced-price lunch  
21 program. This would allow for one  
22 simple standardized application form  
23 for all programs, saving time and  
24 resources for applicants and the  
25 government alike.



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2 Another major obstacle to HRA  
3 being able to process food stamp  
4 applications in a timely fashion is  
5 the number of unnecessary face-to-face  
6 interviews they perform. Interviews  
7 with food stamp applicants cost money,  
8 take up staff time and discourage  
9 people from applying.

10 It is our recommendation that  
11 the Federal and State governments do  
12 more to encourage local Social Service  
13 agencies to eliminate face-to-face  
14 interviews for a variety of people who  
15 have difficulty reaching an office,  
16 such as the elderly, the disabled and  
17 those that work, as well as those that  
18 are recertifying.

19 New York City should go one  
20 step further and take advantage of the  
21 ways to insure better access for  
22 working families, the elderly and the  
23 disabled, by processing applications  
24 by mail, fax or through a  
25 representative.

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2           It is also our recommendation  
3       that the Federal government take  
4       further steps to insure that States  
5       and Counties process all food stamp  
6       applications within 30 days, as  
7       required by law. This could be done  
8       through an incentive programs that  
9       rewards States or Counties for timely  
10      processing of applications.

11           It is also our recommendation  
12      that you waive the -- or do whatever  
13      you can to get rid of the  
14      finger-imaging requirement and invest  
15      more money in updating technology.

16           In conclusion, the Farm Bill  
17      reauthorization of 2007 should  
18      incorporate significant updates to the  
19      way applications are processed with a  
20      goal of getting food stamps into the  
21      hands of those that need them as  
22      quickly as possible.

23           Thank you.

24           MR. CANAVAN: Thank you.

25           MR. BOST: If we could we ask

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2 the remaining presenters, if you  
3 could, if you have written testimony,  
4 if you could summarize that and submit  
5 the written testimony. We are down to  
6 about 30 minutes and we still have  
7 several speakers, and we'd like to get  
8 everybody in but we are going to have  
9 to bring the forum to an end at noon.  
10 So, if you could please summarize your  
11 written notes.

12 MR. CANAVAN: Carlos Rodriguez.

13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Good morning.

14 I would like to thank Food  
15 Nutrition Services and Under-Secretary  
16 Bost for hosting this important  
17 hearing today, and for affording the  
18 Children's Defense Fund the  
19 opportunity to submit testimony.

20 For more than 30 years the  
21 Children's Defense Fund has provided a  
22 strong, effective voice for children  
23 in America who cannot vote, lobby or  
24 speak for themselves. CDF educates  
25 the nation concerning the needs of

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2 children and encourages preventative  
3 investment before they get sick, into  
4 trouble or suffer family breakdown.

5 During the past several years  
6 there has been a shrinking of  
7 political support for programs and  
8 services that assist low-income  
9 families. Concurrently, tax cuts have  
10 been enacted that have  
11 disproportionately benefited the very  
12 wealthy. Yet today in New York more  
13 than 900,000 live in poverty and  
14 thousands of more families struggle  
15 with incomes just above the poverty  
16 level.

17 As a result of their limited  
18 financial abilities, these families  
19 struggle to make ends meet. The food  
20 stamp program responds to the economic  
21 needs, hunger and nutritional needs of  
22 many of these families by granting  
23 benefits to them.

24 Receiving food stamp benefits  
25 means families in New York don't have

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2 to make as many difficult choices  
3 between providing enough food, paying  
4 for heating fuel, housing, child care,  
5 transportation costs or dealing with  
6 economic crises. For the working poor,  
7 the benefit makes work pay by  
8 increasing families' purchasing power  
9 and we see the results here in New  
10 York with the more than 1.2 million  
11 people, 623,000 of whom are children,  
12 receiving food stamps.

13 Unfortunately, however, 1.3  
14 million other New Yorkers, many of  
15 whom work, may also be eligible for  
16 food stamps but are not participating.

17 The socio-economic benefits of  
18 the program are well documented, they  
19 deter hunger, they create a healthy  
20 work force, they help children grown  
21 and learn, they provide nutritious  
22 meals to the elderly and disabled, and  
23 they prevent hunger among the poor.

24 The program should be protected  
25 from changes that will further

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2 endanger poor children and families.

3 And especially in light of tax cuts  
4 that have resulted in over \$100,000  
5 each year for each millionaire across  
6 the country.

7 2002 reauthorization made some  
8 progress toward meeting the needs of  
9 families, and we're going through the  
10 vetos, we know how successful the  
11 authorization has been and we know  
12 that New York responded to these new  
13 Federal opportunities to simplify the  
14 administration of the food stamp  
15 program. We were the first to  
16 implement traditional benefit  
17 alternatives, we adopted less onerous  
18 reporting requirements, we -- and we  
19 took full avail, of course, of the  
20 restoration of eligibility to some  
21 immigrants.

22 As a result, we have seen  
23 participation go up and we'd like to  
24 applaud Under-Secretary Bost, the  
25 regional northeast administration

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2 team, for the leadership and guidance  
3 during the implementation of these  
4 changes, as well as in numerous visits  
5 to New York.

6 However, despite the  
7 improvements made during the 2002  
8 reauthorization, many hungry and  
9 nutritionally needy children and  
10 families continue to be left behind.  
11 Significant improvements are still  
12 needed.

13 I'd just like to focus on a few  
14 key points. We need to remove  
15 arbitrary limits on immigrant  
16 eligibility and restore immigrant --  
17 to all immigrants. Raising the acid  
18 test and tier it to reflect household  
19 size. Exempting all forms of  
20 retirement accounts, educational  
21 savings accounts so as to encourage  
22 families to save and not penalize the  
23 for having savings. And we need to  
24 continue to simplify and remove  
25 onerous application requirements. The

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2 requirement of personal interview  
3 during recertifications is one such  
4 obstacle. To comply with this  
5 requirement, working families as we  
6 heard earlier are often forced to  
7 decide between unpaid work time and  
8 applying for needed food stamps.

9 Recently New York State  
10 completed the implementation of the  
11 New York State nutrition improvement  
12 project. A program that automatically  
13 enrolls SSI recipients into food  
14 stamps --

15 MR. CANAVAN: We really need  
16 to --

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Just look for  
18 simplification across programs. I  
19 think that's where the key successes  
20 do lie.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. CANAVAN: Casandra Dagle?

23 MS. DAGLE: Good morning,  
24 Under-Secretary Bost and committee  
25 members. Thank you very much for the



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2 opportunity to speak today.

3 I'm Casandra Dagle, I'm the  
4 coordinator of the feed the solution  
5 campaign, which is a new anti-hunger  
6 initiative that evolved out of the  
7 Episcopal Diocese of New York. And we  
8 represent the 60-plus emergency  
9 feeding programs within the diocese  
10 who collectively over the last few  
11 years has served over 800,000 meals  
12 annually.

13 I do have written testimony that  
14 I've submitted, and I would like to  
15 take this opportunity to say that feed  
16 the solution strongly supports the  
17 testimony of the New York City  
18 Coalition against hunger and also food  
19 change.

20 But because of time, I'd just  
21 like to focus on one aspect, that is I  
22 guess similar in many areas to other  
23 feeding programs, but specific to our  
24 campaign, in that we are a faith-based  
25 organization and it is these

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2 faith-based organizations who really  
3 are on the front lines of the fight  
4 against hunger. They're very small,  
5 they're volunteer run, they have very  
6 low budgets, many of them pay for food  
7 out of their pockets. And a lot of  
8 them depend solely on government  
9 funding. These are the people who are  
10 referred to in our political climate  
11 as the armies of compassion and also  
12 when we're referring to feeding  
13 initiatives, but I have to say no army  
14 can fight without weapons. And the  
15 weapons that these programs have and  
16 that they depend on to serve hungry  
17 people in New York and across the  
18 country is funding, and TEFAP  
19 programs, ESSP as well as on state and  
20 local levels, and also through food  
21 stamps for their guests.

22 Guests receiving food stamps not  
23 only helps those individuals meet the  
24 needs of their families, but it also  
25 eases the burden on these emergency

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2 food programs who are already  
3 stretched beyond their limits.

4 So if we are expected to  
5 continue in this fight against hunger,  
6 and to continue serving and doing our  
7 moral obligation, in helping hungry  
8 people, then we need the support of  
9 the government, the government has the  
10 resources to end hunger. We need them  
11 to increase our funding, we need them  
12 to unequivocally stay away from any  
13 cuts to the food stamp program, and  
14 like I said, we support the testimony  
15 of other programs here who have  
16 offered very specific key points on  
17 how to improve the food stamp program.

18 Thank you very much for your  
19 time.

20 MR. CANAVAN: Anna Lupay?

21 Could I ask Christine Gerstel,  
22 Ms. Halfon, Heidi Sigfried and  
23 Florence Reed to approach the  
24 microphones?

25 Thank you.

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2 MS. LUPAY: My name is Anna  
3 Lupay and I'm an author and I'm also a  
4 food and society policy fellow with  
5 the Tolek Foundation, and I just  
6 wanted to begin by thanking the USDA  
7 for recognizing the importance of  
8 hearing directly from people across  
9 the country about how the 2007 Farm  
10 Bill can best support the health and  
11 welfare of all Americans. So thank  
12 you very much for organizing the  
13 entire listening tour that you have.

14 I think that we in the U.S.  
15 often pride ourselves in being a  
16 country that is a leader and an  
17 innovator and on the cutting edge of  
18 science and technology.  
19 Unfortunately, when it comes to food,  
20 farming and our health, we're woefully  
21 behind. Though we're one of the  
22 richest nations in the world, as all  
23 of you know, the number of people in  
24 the U.S. who are food-insecure is more  
25 than 35,000,000, which is equal to the

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2 entire population of Canada. And  
3 knowing we pride ourselves in our  
4 scientific acumen, we've created this  
5 food system that is grossly wasteful,  
6 stripped us of food security by the  
7 destruction of our diversity and by  
8 its over-reliance on water, oil,  
9 petroleum-based pesticides and that  
10 has helped to spur an unprecedented  
11 epidemic of obesity.

12 We can do better, and changing  
13 priorities within the Farm Bill is one  
14 of the most powerful ways to position  
15 ourselves as the global leader that we  
16 should be.

17 I would like to just make three  
18 specific points for which I believe  
19 there is broad bipartisan support in  
20 this country.

21 First, eliminate  
22 disproportionate subsidies. Through  
23 my work I get to travel around this  
24 country, talking to Americans from  
25 many, may different backgrounds, and

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2 most Americans I talk to are shocked  
3 when they learn that our taxpayer  
4 dollars for farm subsidies go  
5 disproportionately to the country's  
6 biggest farms.

7 We can reform commodity policy,  
8 introduce effect payment limitations  
9 on the commodity program, by  
10 eliminating subsidies to mega farms  
11 that are among, as many people have  
12 said today, the nation's worst  
13 polluters and so destructive to the  
14 fabric of rural communities, reforms  
15 that would also promote fairness in  
16 the market, and assist smaller family  
17 farms to becoming self-sustaining.

18 Two, the second point I'd like  
19 to make to support sustainable farming  
20 and reduce costly environmental  
21 destruction. The recent double  
22 catastrophe of Hurricanes Katrina and  
23 Rita have woken up many Americans to  
24 the very real threat of global warming  
25 or, as I think it should be more

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2 accurately called, climate chaos. And  
3 there is now growing and broad  
4 bipartisan support for policies that  
5 would address this crisis.

6 U.S. industrial factory farms  
7 are one of the nation's leading  
8 emitters of greenhouse gasses. We  
9 know we don't need these industrial  
10 farms in order to have abundant food  
11 and in fact we now know the extent to  
12 which they can actually decrease our  
13 food abundance. So we can support  
14 farming on policies that encourage  
15 more sustainable practices,  
16 conservation, rural development, by  
17 looking at things like the beginning  
18 farmer and rancher development  
19 program, and by funding the  
20 conservation security program and  
21 making sure it's implemented in a way  
22 that truly supports sustainable and  
23 conservation based systems.

24 The third point I'd like to  
25 make, as its come up today, also

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2 through a number of speakers, is to  
3 promote healthy nutrition. Again,  
4 there's broad consensus among  
5 Americans of all political persuasions  
6 that healthy food should be accessible  
7 to everyone, not just those rich  
8 enough to afford it.

9 The Farm Bill can expand its  
10 programs to increase access to healthy  
11 food for all Americans, particularly  
12 low-income families, children, and the  
13 elderly.

14 These recommendations are not  
15 just good ideas, they make real  
16 economic sense, are cost-effective and  
17 develop healthier communities that  
18 will be more food-secure in the  
19 long-term.

20 Thank you.

21 MR. CANAVAN: Christine  
22 Gerstel?

23 MS. GERSTEL: Good morning. My  
24 name is Christine Gerstel. I'm a  
25 registered dietitian, current



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2 president of the Greater New York  
3 Dietetic Association, and I'm here  
4 today on behalf of the American  
5 Dietetic Association.

6 The public needs an  
7 uncompromising commitment from their  
8 government to advance nutrition  
9 knowledge and to help people apply  
10 that knowledge to maintain and improve  
11 their health. Millions of Americans  
12 benefit from the USDA food assistance  
13 program. But we still see hunger in  
14 the United States.

15 Co-existing with hunger is a  
16 national epidemic of overweight and  
17 obesity. And, in fact, overweight and  
18 obesity is the largest manifestation  
19 of malnutrition in the United States  
20 today.

21 The next Farm Bill needs to  
22 address four key areas:

23 First, USDA's food assistance  
24 programs must be available to those in  
25 need and be adequately funded.

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2 Second, improving the  
3 nutritional status of Americans needs  
4 to rise in priority in food assistance  
5 programs, other food programs and  
6 really for all Americans.

7 Third, increased investment in  
8 nutrition education and nutrition  
9 research is necessary and must be  
10 sustained.

11 And finally, having up-to-date  
12 knowledge of the nutrition composition  
13 of the food supply is absolutely  
14 essential in order for all of our work  
15 in food, nutrition and health to bear  
16 fruit.

17 If we expect consumers to take  
18 personal responsibility for making  
19 health choices, then we have a  
20 responsibility to make sure they're  
21 adequately prepared to do so.

22 The government must invest in  
23 the nutrition research and nutrition  
24 education necessary to give Americans  
25 the knowledge and ability to make

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2 their own nutrition decisions. These  
3 nutrition recommendations and programs  
4 for the public must be based on sound  
5 science and only the Federal  
6 government has the public mandate and  
7 resources to carry out research on  
8 human nutrition needs and to develop  
9 dietary guidance that forms the basis  
10 for all Federal nutrition programs.

11 We believe that Federal  
12 research, exploring the relationships  
13 between diet, especially dietary  
14 patterns and health is particularly  
15 important and should be included in  
16 the Farm Bill proposal.

17 Thank you.

18 MR. CANAVAN: Ms. Halfon?

19 MS. HALFON: Hi. I'm with the  
20 Hunger Network of New York State.  
21 Some of our recommendations for the  
22 upcoming Farm Bill include the  
23 elimination of prohibiting of  
24 finger-imaging for food stamp  
25 applications. This is something that

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2 we know through our surveys and  
3 outreach has been a very intimidating  
4 and stigmatizing issue for applicants.  
5 In the private sector I was having a  
6 conversation with someone working for  
7 a major blue-chip company who was  
8 doing rebates on a product, you know,  
9 you buy the product and you go home  
10 and you do the coupon. Well, the  
11 strategy of the corporation is to say  
12 well, we want you to buy the product  
13 but we really don't want you to redeem  
14 the \$5 coupon, so what we're going to  
15 do is require you to put your Social  
16 Security number on these rebates and,  
17 as a result, in this one campaign in  
18 the south they had extremely low  
19 rebates and that just tells you that  
20 that's a common response of everyday  
21 persons to say, well, you want my  
22 fingerprints, you know, to get food,  
23 you want my Social Security -- I'd  
24 rather not do that. So it's a huge  
25 barrier.

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2 The second thing, recommendation  
3 is to restore food stamps for eligible  
4 working non-citizens. Many of us have  
5 heard about the Social Security crisis  
6 or issue and when you go and you look  
7 at where, what's going to save Social  
8 Security, one of the main issues or  
9 factors is if we can maintain the  
10 level of immigration into our country.  
11 So in a way the immigrants that come  
12 here are going to help us save Social  
13 Security.

14 So while they're here, working  
15 and doing many low-income  
16 under-minimum-wage jobs, they should  
17 really -- they and their children  
18 should really have access to the food  
19 program.

20 Third is to please request the  
21 USDA to finalize the renaming of the  
22 food card program -- the food stamp  
23 program. This is -- we were all very  
24 excited about this, we all feel that  
25 this is something that would greatly

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2 benefit the outreach efforts in  
3 getting to those in need.

4 The -- increasing the minimum  
5 benefits level from \$10 to \$50 would  
6 be significant in helping us reach new  
7 folks, including the seniors, as well  
8 as just increasing the food stamp  
9 benefits level, even in the USDA  
10 research it shows that nearly half the  
11 food stamp households have answered  
12 that they are food-insecure. The food  
13 stamp allotment, though a wonderful  
14 program, is just not enough to keep  
15 the food on the tables of the families  
16 and working families.

17 And in terms of the TEFAP  
18 program, in our surveys we found that  
19 there's a huge demand in emergency  
20 food and we really encourage the USDA  
21 to continue funding and supporting  
22 that program.

23 Thank you.

24 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you.

25 Heidi Sigfried?

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2 MS. SIGFRIED: Hi. I'm Heidi  
3 Sigfried. I'm the supervising  
4 attorney at the Partnership for the  
5 Homeless here in New York City.

6 We've provided a broad range of  
7 services to homeless New Yorkers for  
8 the past 20 years. We've run a family  
9 resource center to help people who are  
10 transitioning out of the shelter  
11 system to permanent housing in East  
12 New York and, of course, those  
13 families use food stamps quite a bit.  
14 We also run a 24-hour drop-in center  
15 for elderly homeless people and they  
16 benefit from food stamps as well.

17 Historically, the food stamp  
18 program has been the widest Federal  
19 safety net for those in need of income  
20 support. The rules regarding access  
21 to the program by people experiencing  
22 homelessness are an important feature  
23 of the law that insure that people  
24 with the least access to other sources  
25 of income have the means to secure

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2 food necessary for their survival.  
3 These include the homeless shelter  
4 deduction, they include that you don't  
5 need a fixed address to get food  
6 stamps, they include the expedited  
7 food service rules.

8 We have a number of  
9 recommendations that we want to make.

10 One, of course, is that the  
11 thrifty food plan basically does not  
12 accurately reflect the needs of people  
13 applying for food stamps at this time,  
14 especially for homeless people who may  
15 not have access to an expensive  
16 supermarket.

17 So we would recommend that we  
18 look at using the moderate food plan  
19 for calculating benefits.

20 Then a second recommendation is  
21 to allow the purchase of hot prepared  
22 foods. The thrifty food plan menus  
23 include many foods that must be  
24 prepared from scratch, and require  
25 hours of cooking time which is



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2 unrealistic for working poor families  
3 today.

4 It's also not the way most  
5 Americans are eating. It's  
6 particularly unrealistic for people  
7 experiencing homelessness who do not  
8 always have a way to heat, chill or  
9 prepare food items that are allowable  
10 with their food stamp allotment.

11 USDA has used its authority to  
12 establish temporary emergency  
13 standards of eligibility to allow  
14 retail stores license to accept food  
15 stamps in four states and six counties  
16 affected by the hurricanes, to accept  
17 food stamp benefits in exchange for  
18 hot foods.

19 The food stamp program should  
20 allow the purchase of hot prepared  
21 foods as an acceptable use of food  
22 stamps to make the program more  
23 helpful for everyone or, at a minimum,  
24 for all people without access to a  
25 kitchen.

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2 A third recommendation would be  
3 to eliminate work requirements. Once  
4 again, we want to emphasize that the  
5 food stamp program is a nutrition  
6 assistance program, it should not have  
7 work requirements associated with  
8 eligibility.

9 In New York we've experienced a  
10 jobless recovery and especially for  
11 ABODs, if they are not able to find  
12 enough hours of work, it has  
13 particularly onerous effects.

14 Certainly the temporary  
15 exemptions from work rules and ABOD  
16 requirements that have been used for  
17 the disaster food stamp program are  
18 important and should at least be  
19 extended to all homeless families.

20 Finally, I just want to mention  
21 in removing the excess shelter  
22 deduction cap, homelessness in New  
23 York City is driven by an  
24 out-of-control real estate market.  
25 One out of four households pay more

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2 than 50% of their income in rent and  
3 that's not the adjusted income that we  
4 get in the food stamps. And also they  
5 have fair market rent for a  
6 two-bedroom apartment is \$1,075. So  
7 we really think that the excess  
8 shelter deduction cap should be remove  
9 to help -- to target benefits  
10 especially to people so that they  
11 don't become homeless.

12 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you.

13 As Florence Reed approaches,  
14 could for Alice Slater, Chris Cooper,  
15 Ian Durgin and Chris Hunt to be ready  
16 to speak.

17 We're getting very close to the  
18 end. If we can just get to the  
19 synopsis. Thank you.

20 MS. REED: Good morning. I'm  
21 Florence Reed. I'm director of the  
22 nutrition program, state-wide  
23 nutrition program, with the New York  
24 State Office for the Aging.

25 Welcome to New York. We're very

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2 pleased to have you be here and have  
3 this opportunity today. Our program  
4 served 24,000,000 meals last year in  
5 both the congregate and home-delivered  
6 meals programs. It's one of the  
7 largest nutrition feeding programs in  
8 the nation. And you are being hosted  
9 here in New York City by the single  
10 largest area agency on aging in the  
11 country. It represents 40 percent of  
12 older adults in New York State.

13 NATLO's hierarchy of needs tells  
14 us that there are some basic things  
15 that we all need before we can become  
16 all that we are capable of being.  
17 Food, clothing and shelter. And we're  
18 here talking about food this morning.

19 New York State Office for the  
20 Aging is one of the several partners  
21 in New York State that runs the senior  
22 farmers' market program. We have  
23 provided written comment for the  
24 record.

25 I want to focus my remarks on

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2 what I consider a theme. And it  
3 applies to the senior farmers' market  
4 program, it applies to all of our food  
5 programs. We firmly believe, based on  
6 our experience with seniors, and we  
7 have very poignant and mind-etching  
8 images from the two hurricanes that  
9 very clearly depict the vulnerable  
10 nature of older adults, how difficult  
11 it is for them to do things.

12 Therefore, we believe that our  
13 program operation, whether it's the  
14 senior farmers' market program,  
15 whether it's the food stamp program,  
16 whether it's nutrition education, must  
17 first and foremost be client-focused,  
18 it must be streamlined, it must be  
19 limited in nature, and the least  
20 intrusive possible.

21 In other words, you should not  
22 have program operation and  
23 administration that is out of  
24 proportion to the benefit that the  
25 person receives. And that's clearly

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2 true with the senior farmers' market  
3 program. I believe that its current  
4 style of operation is one of the  
5 reasons why it is so successful.

6 Lastly, in terms of food stamps,  
7 I want to urge you to pay attention to  
8 all of the USDA generated evidence and  
9 evidence from other places. The  
10 number one barrier to seniors for  
11 applying for food stamps is the  
12 application and the process and what  
13 we put people through. I would call  
14 your specific attention to the use of  
15 technology and an example that was  
16 developed by the New York City office  
17 for aging, because what it does, which  
18 all of the rest of the programs you  
19 have heard about do not do, is that it  
20 simultaneously tests, predicts  
21 eligibility and produces facsimile  
22 applications for 18 public and private  
23 benefit programs through one intake  
24 interview, and it was developed by  
25 public-private funding, it is in

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2 operation, and I'm sure that the  
3 commissioner of the Department for the  
4 Aging in New York City, Commissioner  
5 Mendez, would be more than delighted  
6 to provide you with an opportunity to  
7 see it.

8 Thank you very much for this  
9 opportunity to be here.

10 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you.

11 Alice Slater?

12 MR. BOST: Before you start, in  
13 terms of the -- to let you know where  
14 we are, it's five past 12. I'm going  
15 to make a couple of closing remarks,  
16 and at ten past 12 I'm going to leave.

17 I have other commitments this  
18 afternoon that I cannot get out of and  
19 so of you, I just want to let you know  
20 I'm not being rude but I think, you  
21 know, sometimes those schedules, they  
22 are what they are.

23 So, I'll be sensitive to those  
24 that are talking so that at five past  
25 12, that's the schedule for the rest

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2 of the day.

3 Yes?

4 MS. SLATER: Thank you. I'm  
5 delighted to have you here in our  
6 city, and it's wonderful that the USDA  
7 is coming to New York City to hear our  
8 -- what we're thinking about our Farm  
9 Bill, and I'm the president of GRACE,  
10 the Global Resource Action Center of  
11 the Environment.

12 We have our great factory farms  
13 project, but we have eight farms in  
14 the commonness working across the  
15 country to help rural communities keep  
16 these large industrial farms out of  
17 their communities, they have been  
18 devastating the environment, putting  
19 small farmers out of business, having  
20 incredibly bad health effects, and we  
21 also with people that produce the  
22 matrix of the -- the name of it --  
23 it's been kind of intimate phenomenon  
24 and I guess it's disturbing that our  
25 government is actually supporting



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2 this, I mean the subsidies that are  
3 going to these large farms. More than  
4 twice as many taxpayer dollars went to  
5 large farms rather than to small  
6 family farms. And we have since 1996  
7 the number of small family farms has  
8 declined in the hog industry by 72  
9 percent. We lost over 247,000 farms.  
10 And this does go to nutrition because  
11 the quality of the food that we're  
12 getting from those farms is not the  
13 same in terms of the sustainable local  
14 regionally produced food we want to  
15 see today.

16 I'm particularly concerned that  
17 some of these subsidies now are going  
18 to methane digestors. In other words  
19 they're creating these tons of wastes,  
20 they've -- you, yourself estimate that  
21 in the U.S. that the meat industry  
22 produce 1.4 billions tons of waste,  
23 this was in 1997, 130 times human  
24 waste, and more than five tons of  
25 animal waste for every U.S. citizen.

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2 And they're being concentrated and  
3 they're being in the rivers and the  
4 streams and now there was just a news  
5 story yesterday or the day before that  
6 in Nebraska a hog farm that raises  
7 8,000 hogs is getting \$500,000 from  
8 the USDA to create a methane digester  
9 so they can turn this waste into  
10 energy. So what we're doing by  
11 subsidizing ways for these farmers to  
12 have big corporations to clean up  
13 their waste, we are paying the money  
14 so we can perpetuate the system.

15 So we urge you to look at this  
16 and please stop subsidizing factory  
17 farms.

18 Thank you.

19 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you, Ms.  
20 Slater.

21 Mr. Cooper?

22 MR. COOPER: Good morning. My  
23 name is Chris Cooper. I'm a New York  
24 City taxpayer. Thanks for coming and  
25 listening to us this morning.

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2 In your opening comments,  
3 Secretary Bost, you characterized food  
4 stamps not as a welfare program but a  
5 nutrition program. And you also  
6 indicated that over half the  
7 participants are children. And the  
8 literature provided here today tells  
9 us all that we know to be true, that  
10 the food stamp program is  
11 overwhelmingly directed towards  
12 America's most vulnerable communities,  
13 children, the elderly, pregnant  
14 mothers and socio-economically  
15 challenged families, which usually  
16 means low-income, rural and minority  
17 Americans.

18 There are a lot of statistics in  
19 this material that talk about food  
20 insecurity and vulnerable communities  
21 in terms of what they need to get.  
22 Things like the total amount of food  
23 and sufficient levels of vitamins and  
24 minerals. What it doesn't talk about  
25 is what they don't ask for, don't need

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2 but are getting anyway from taxpayer  
3 funded programs under the Farm Bill.  
4 Why, for example, did a vast majority  
5 of subsidies under the Farm Bill get a  
6 large industrialized factory farms  
7 that concentrate wastes from tens of  
8 thousands of animals in ways that foul  
9 the air and water consumed by the same  
10 vulnerable communities that are  
11 supposed to be served by USDA  
12 nutrition programs?

13 Why is it that these most  
14 vulnerable communities, children, the  
15 elderly, minority communities are  
16 subject to the largest involuntary  
17 experiment to test the safety of  
18 genetically modified crops and  
19 organisms?

20 Ironically, it is these same  
21 crops overwhelmingly used by large  
22 industrial farms that receive the  
23 disproportionate amount of taxpayer  
24 subsidy under the Farm Bill.

25 Finally, why is it that USDA

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2 puts at risk these same vulnerable  
3 communities, children, the elderly,  
4 minority families, by directing Farm  
5 Bill subsidies towards large  
6 industrial factory farms that use  
7 nontherapeutic antibiotics to fatten  
8 pigs and chickens and cows but in the  
9 meantime render these antibiotics  
10 useless to the very vulnerable  
11 populations that rely on them to save  
12 their lives?

13 Doesn't it seem practically  
14 obscene to characterize some of the  
15 programs under the Farm Bill as  
16 nutrition programs for vulnerable  
17 communities while adopting policies  
18 under other parts of the farm bill  
19 that risk the health and safety of  
20 these same communities?

21 Secretary Bost, I know you're  
22 going to say you're not responsible  
23 for these other programs, but I  
24 implore you, use whatever influence  
25 that you have not to let the upper --

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2 the people who are above you fence you  
3 into just these programs.

4 In order to bring true security  
5 to these same vulnerable communities  
6 that you're trying to reach through  
7 the nutrition programs like food  
8 stamps, we need to insure their health  
9 and safety by considering all aspects  
10 of the Farm Bill and not just those  
11 programs deemed nutrition.

12 Thank you.

13 MR. CANAVAN: Mr. Durgin.

14 MR. DURGIN: Good morning. How  
15 are you?

16 MR. CANAVAN: Good morning.

17 MR. DURGIN: I'm just going to  
18 highlight and submit written  
19 testimony.

20 But I just want to say firstly  
21 that I want to thank USDA for  
22 convening this forum and that the food  
23 bank for New York City, the  
24 organization I represent, echos much  
25 of what is being said about food

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2 stamps this morning, particularly  
3 about restoring eligibility guidelines  
4 for immigrants.

5 The other issue that I want to  
6 quickly bring to your attention is  
7 funding for the TEFAP program, the  
8 emergency food assistance program.

9 Here in New York City our research  
10 shows that the food bank is providing  
11 food and support services to over  
12 1,200 emergency food programs who in  
13 turn supply food to approximately half  
14 of the two million New Yorkers at risk  
15 of hunger.

16 Now, last year we provided  
17 67,000,000 pounds of food in order to  
18 meet this need, which is roughly about  
19 -- an increase of almost half in the  
20 past five years.

21 Regrettably, government funding  
22 for the emergency food programs of the  
23 city are at the three levels of the  
24 City, State and Federal Funding  
25 levels, have not sort of kept in step

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2 with the need. And so therefore we  
3 want to ask you to do all that you can  
4 to bring about an increase in the  
5 TEFAP program. Just afford a modest  
6 suggestion of 200,000,000 for the  
7 mandatory funding level and bring the  
8 admin funding up to 100,000,000. This  
9 as you know is not a major increase  
10 but it would certainly help us to make  
11 sure that New Yorkers who are at risk  
12 of hunger are getting the services  
13 that they need.

14 Additionally, I think one of the  
15 other issues that USDA can take care  
16 of is program coordination. We know  
17 certainly from the testimony provided  
18 this morning by other groups that  
19 there is difficulty for many New  
20 Yorkers who are at risk of hunger  
21 getting the help they need. This is  
22 particularly true of the working poor  
23 and the elderly. You know, completing  
24 numerous application for different  
25 programs makes it very difficult for



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2 people to get assistance. And so we  
3 recommend that there be one  
4 application form for all of the  
5 nutrition programs funded by USDA.  
6 And if somebody is eligible for any  
7 number of programs, that one  
8 application form should connect them  
9 to all of those programs. This would  
10 make it very easy for example for a  
11 70-year-old woman who lives on her own  
12 in New York City to get the food and  
13 assistance that she needs.

14 And with that I thank you for  
15 taking the time this morning and I  
16 will submit all of our other  
17 recommendations in written testimony.

18 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you.

19 Chris Hunt?

20 MR. HUNT: I'll keep my comments  
21 very brief.

22 My name is Chris Hunt. And I'm  
23 here today as a concerned citizen.

24 I'm concerned about the  
25 production of meat and dairy products

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2 in the U.S. I'm concerned that the  
3 Farm Bill continues to support  
4 industrial livestock production by  
5 subsidizing the nation's largest  
6 concentrated animal feeding  
7 operations. These facilities  
8 perpetually generate tremendous  
9 quantities of surplus animal waste  
10 which pollutes our waterways, our soil  
11 and our air. Damaging human health,  
12 degrading our natural environment, and  
13 costing taxpayers billions of dollars  
14 every year.

15 Viable alternatives to  
16 industrial animal production exist.  
17 In order to protect human health, the  
18 environment and our nation's rural  
19 communities, the Farm Bill should  
20 promote these sustainable alternatives  
21 rather than subsidizing the hazardous  
22 confined animal feeding operations.

23 Thank you very much for your  
24 time.

25 MR. CANAVAN: Thank you.

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2 Adele Latoret.

3 MS. LATORET: My name is Adele  
4 Latoret. I'm the director of the  
5 state-wide emergency food and  
6 anti-hunger network in New Jersey.

7 I said that in one breath.

8 And the New Jersey anti-hunger  
9 coalition. Great to have you here.

10 Quickly, I know one of the  
11 things I really wanted to get in  
12 quickly is, you talked before about  
13 limiting people's choices. Can I say  
14 that instead of limiting people's  
15 choices who already have limited  
16 choices 'cause of their limited  
17 income, let's focus more on providing  
18 an adequate benefit in the food stamp  
19 program instead of what they can and  
20 cannot buy.

21 Keep the entitlement structure  
22 for the program intact. No cuts to  
23 the food stamp program. Raise income  
24 eligibility to 185 percent of poverty.  
25 Make all households receiving SSI

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2 categorically eligible for food  
3 stamps. Allow children under the age  
4 of 22 who have children and are living  
5 with their parents to apply as  
6 separate households. Raise the  
7 minimum benefit from \$10 to at least  
8 35, increase all allotments across the  
9 board, reduce the complexity and  
10 stigma, include customer service  
11 training in front-line staff, and  
12 insure that all State offices and  
13 local offices have extended hours for  
14 working families, who is more of who  
15 you serve.

16 Thank you.

17 MR. CANAVAN: (Inaudible.)

18 (Recommendations being made -  
19 speak too far from microphone -  
20 inaudible for the most part.)

21 The last thing that I would say  
22 is this: The issues (inaudible) for  
23 eligible persons, increasing the  
24 number of children that are eligible  
25 for our program (inaudible) making it

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2 easier for people to (inaudible)  
3 things that are very important to me  
4 personally and we will continue to  
5 work (inaudible) regardless of what  
6 happens (inaudible). We will be  
7 (inaudible).

8 I really appreciate you being  
9 here, we appreciate your (inaudible)  
10 across the country as we go through  
11 this process. Again, it's always a  
12 pleasure (inaudible). Thank you.